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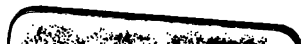
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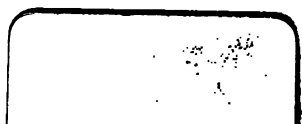


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COUNTY SOCIETY.

A NOVEL

"Vérité sans peur."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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COUNTY SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

SHADOWS.

KATE HOWARD felt as if she had been stunned by an actual blow. The morning had passed like a distempered dream; she could not realize the truth of her experience.

Her father suffered equally with herself. His daughter had been insulted by a villain—that villain his sister's son; the honour of his house was tarnished, his family pride was dragged in the dust, and the fact that he had no remedy rendered the injury additionally painful.

Although duelling was out of fashion, had Levinge not been his nephew, he would have called him out; but under the circumstances to move in the affair would only make matters worse, therefore he was compelled to sit down under his affliction, the most painful course that a fiery spirit could adopt, but for him there was no alternative.

"We'll leave the county, Kate," said he, next

morning at breakfast ; “ you shall not be subjected to the abominable pity of your acquaintance, who, while condoling with us, will secretly exult at our misfortune.”

“ No, papa,” said Kate, perfectly calm and firm ; “ we have not erred, we have nothing to be ashamed of, as far as we ourselves are concerned ; and because that man has trampled all laws, human and divine, under foot, it is no reason that we should be punished. I know we shall be obliged to listen to a great deal of mock sympathy, and I know that some people will please themselves by quoting the adage, ‘ Pride must have a fall ;’ yet none of these probabilities afford us sufficient reasons to leave the county, as if we dreaded to face the world.”

“ As you will, my dear,” replied her father ; “ you have the most to bear.”

“ Have you sent over to the Rectory to inquire how that poor girl is ?”

“ No, I have not ; but Watson told me that she stole away in the dusk of the evening, and has not been heard of since.”

“ How strange !” rejoined Kate ; “ I wonder who she is ?”

“ Some —— of that wretch, I should think, whom he has paid off.”

This answer was not a satisfactory one, and amid her own sorrow and mortification she could not help thinking of the fate of the stranger.

Mrs. Jones called before luncheon, and was ad-

mitted. The good lady repeated all that the reader knows respecting Zizzi's stay at the Rectory, which, however, did not throw much light on the subject. "She seems a very gentle creature, my dear. Mr. Jones read to her, and she said that she was a Catholic, and never heard the words of the Bible before. She cried a great deal, but when she spoke her voice was very sweet, and her accent was that of a foreigner. We did not ask her any questions, but I am sure she is a lady, although she was so simply dressed."

"Oh, man! man!" thought Kate, "made in the likeness of God, the express image of his person, with native nobility of soul sufficient to restore paradise, with strength to conquer and to help, the natural protector of the weak, the glory of creation, how dost thou belie thy nature, and turn thy power to evil uses! Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin—what mightest thou not become?—what art thou now?"

It was but another clay idol broken; every worshipper in the great "Pantheon, the Temple of Life," bows down before his particular shrine, believing that, though all prove false, his must be an exception. But when image after image is shivered, and we see ourselves surrounded with the fragments of the wreck, who is there that does not cry "vanity! vanity!" when we should rather (taking the past for our guide) select all that is worthy of preservation, and contenting ourselves with perfect parts, live in the hope of uniting them hereafter in an harmonious whole.

Could Kate have known Zizzi's past history, she would have been more interested in her than she even was now. Could she have seen the young beauty of Syra queening it among her peers, the beloved of her friends of both sexes; could she have seen her joyousness and known her purity; could she have watched her duly performing the duties that devolved upon her under her father's humble roof, or with her floated over the waters of the Ægean, now plunging in their depths like a young mermaid, and now directing her light skiff in the fresh breeze when the white breakers flashed along the rocks; or when the wind fell and the tide drifted her boat along the cliffs, and floated it into caves where her clear voice made the echoes leap for joy—could she have known all this, she would have pitied her more. Could she have returned with her to her home when she found herself betrayed and beleaguered with spies, her heart would have bled for her. Could she have followed her that night (when the storm howled) out through the low window, down over the steep rocks, alone in the tiny boat adrift on the open sea, trusting that some chance ship might rescue her, she would have admired her. But these particulars she knew not; and though the young Greek maid had come between her and her love, she did not hate or feel jealous of her; no, her own soul was too pure, her goodness too practical, her faith too sincere. And now, in the midst of her own sorrow, when the most sacred feelings of her nature had been despised,

she thought more of the fate of her cousin's first victim than she did of her own wrongs.

Alas! she was powerless to act, the object of her sympathy was beyond her reach.

CHAPTER II.

ANTICIPATION.

WHEN Levinge heard the plunge of his victim in the water, his first sensation was that of gratified revenge. Unmoved, he listened to her struggles ; she uttered no cry, and at last every sound ceased. He looked over the wall, but the mist from the moat concealed every object beneath, and the clouds, now bursting into rain, poured forth a torrent, and drove him for shelter into the house.

When he regained the room, it occurred to him, for the first time, that, for his own sake, he ought to have alarmed the household and made a show of rescuing the poor girl ; but already so many minutes had elapsed, that he feared their assistance would not suffice to remove suspicion from him when the body should be recovered. He now began to tremble for his own safety. "What a chain of circumstantial evidence," he muttered, "will be brought against me ! No one will believe my tale, my evidence will

be laughed to scorn, in the face of my presumptive guilt. The best course I can adopt is to secure and then secrete the body. I can conceal it in the caves, take it down the river by night, and throw it overboard, where it shall remain unseen for ever."

With this idea uppermost he waited for dawn, and with the early daylight he proceeded in his search.

Backwards and forwards beside the moat he stalked staring at the motionless waters; but they gave him no answer, and with a heart sickening with the apprehension of a fearful fate, he returned to the sitting room, and thence to bed, before the servants had begun to stir.

Any deviation from his usual routine might have excited suspicion, therefore he appeared at the breakfast table almost at his usual hour, and afterwards pretended to occupy himself with letters and papers as if nothing had occurred to disturb the order of his everyday life. But as every hour passed away, the uncertainty respecting the appearance of his victim's body nearly frenzied him.

"I will go to the nearest magistrate and make a deposition of the facts," was one resolution. Then, when he remembered that several hours had passed during which he had not spoken of the circumstance to any one of his servants, he felt how useless would be any attempt on his part to vindicate himself. He revolved every possible contingency in his mind, and at length finally determined to wait and watch.

He had read that the bodies of drowned persons

rise on the ninth day, and with shuddering anxiety he abided the fearful hour.

"Oh," thought he, "that I could fly the country but what if her corpse be found during my absence?" So night after night he sat in the same room, waiting like a felon who expects his doom, or stealthily creeping out at intervals in the moonlight to make his weary round.

Terrible was the suspense of those days ; his servants shrank from encountering the fiendish expression of his eyes, and wondered what master found to look at in the moat. He could neither eat nor sleep ; wine in immense quantities supported, but did not inebriate him. Every sound fell on his ear like a knell, when, with the casement open, his head supported by his hands, his arms resting on the window sill, he used to sit for hours listening ; and if a carp came up to breathe, or frog croaked, he shivered from head to foot.

Day after day passed, but the secret of the deep waters round his dwelling remained inviolate. He was a good swimmer, and at length resolved in the early morning, before any of his household should awake, to dive and ascertain the whereabouts of the body. Before day dawned he stood shivering on the brink, but, though naturally courageous, the idea of meeting his victim in her grave unnerved him. How could he touch her body dead, who had suffered her to perish helplessly before him ? How could he endure the contact of that slimy hand beneath the element that destroyed her ? How could he disentangle from the weeds the hair

I

whose beauty he had so often praised ; when that hand was cold, that loveliness destroyed by his infernal villainy ? Impossible ! He shuddered and returned.

When the ninth night came round he resolved to watch until the morning, and he paced to and fro by the parapet at intervals, peering over the edge, a prey to a thousand fancies, his reason well nigh unhinged. At one time he thought he would dig a grave in the flower-garden, and then bury her. Then he gave up that idea, and recurred to his former intention of taking the body down the river. Then every plan was dependent on the time when the corpse might appear. If in the daytime, discovery would be inevitable ; he almost prayed that it would float in the night. Midnight came, and he still maintained his watch ; three o'clock came, and just as the first flash of dawn had spread over the sky, he saw something on the water, something large and dark ; there was little or no current in the moat, and yet it came nearer. His flesh crept, and he shook as with a palsy ; nearer it came, still nearer, " My God !" said he, " it is she." His teeth chattered audibly, what should he do ? It approached the wall beneath him ; he had no rope, no means of reaching the object, neither could he distinctly make it out ; but what his vision lacked his imagination supplied. It was the body of his victim. The more convinced he was of the fact, the more overpowering became his desire to conceal her fate ; there was no alternative, he must plunge in and drag it out. It was his only chance ; in less than an hour it would be broad day, and some one

might be awake and see him. He had thrown one leg over the wall, and was about to lift over the other, so that he might lower himself quietly into the water, when he felt a hand on his shoulder; he was seized by the collar of his coat and dragged backward. Instantly starting to his feet, without a moment's consideration, he knocked the intruder down, when he found that the object of his wrath was none other than his old butler, who, having watched him for the last few days, had thought that his master was about to commit suicide, and had concealed himself in the deep shadow behind a projection in the façade of the house, from whence he rushed forward to prevent the catastrophe, which he naturally supposed was imminent. Levinge's first care was to return to the edge of the terrace to look at the position of the body—it was gone; he strained his eyes, and had he not been blinded by his fears, he would have seen a black swan swimming up in the direction of the drawbridge; as it was, he believed his fancy cheated him.

The old man was only stunned, and in a few minutes staggered after his master into the house; secretly repenting of his temerity, and vowing that master might drown himself a dozen times if he liked, for him.

Three weeks rolled round their weary length of agonizing suspense without affording him any relief.

Haughton Hall was a place of torment, and come what may he must leave it; so he started for London, with the feeling that at any hour he might become the tenant of a gaol.

CHAPTER III.

THE BALANCE SHEET.

AT or about the time when the events occurred related in the last chapter, Eveleyn was in the harvest field towards the close of the day, superintending the mowers, who were cutting down a field of barley. In accordance with his usual habit, he had a book in his hand, "The Bridgewater Treatise." Deeply interested in the work, he thought little of crops or any kind of business, and when any ideas distracted his mind from the page, they still had some relation to philosophy.

"Pretty good crop, sir," said a voice beside him; he started, it was his father's managing clerk in the mill.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. James? Come out for a breath of fresh air, I suppose?"

"Partly so, sir, and partly to see you."

"To see me, did you say?"

"Yes, I want a word in private with you, sir."

"I am at your service," said Eveleyn.

Looking round to assure himself that there were no

eavesdroppers, James commenced—"I must first state that my communication is a confidential one, and that, to a certain extent, I am guilty of a breach of trust in making it to you, sir."

"You had better reserve it to yourself then. I do not wish to hear other persons' secrets," said Eveleyn.

"Pardon me," replied James, "the only breach is that of informing a son of his father's affairs, when he may do him a service."

"What!" exclaimed Eveleyn.

"Hear me," resumed James. "The confidential position that I hold under your father, causes me to be intimately versed in the account books, therefore I am far better acquainted with the state of his business affairs than yourself, and it is my painful duty to tell you that a crisis is impending. In consequence of the failure of Merault and Co., of Rouen, and the great West India firm, Chapel Brothers of Bristol, all their bills have come back (and the assets in both cases are merely nominal). Mr. Evelyn has been pressed for money, and has been obliged to overdraw at Coutts, to the amount of ten thousand, and to-day your father received a letter from them, requesting his attention to the state of his account, meaning thereby that his credit is getting short, and unfortunately there is nothing that can be realized immediately to put into their hands. This is the fifteenth; on the first of next month your father's acceptance of I. W. Wilton's draft for five hundred falls due, and the week after, three others, making in all a total of three thousand one



hundred and twenty-eight pounds; none of which I fear Coutts will honour, as money is very tight in the city. If these bills are returned, of course Mr. Evelyn must stop payment, and I thought it my duty to let you know how matters stand."

Eveleyn was thunderstruck. He had always entertained the opinion that his father was a rich man, as, in truth, he was a few months ago, and the idea of his becoming a bankrupt almost stupefied him. Bitterly did he reproach himself that his inattention to the routine of the office should have given a clerk an opportunity to inform him on a subject which, if he had chosen, he might have been equally well acquainted with. Then, when he remembered how calmly, and with what undisturbed serenity of manner the kind old man, his father, had borne all his anxiety, that his son, in the heyday of youth and strength, might be spared the mortification of passing through a season of temporary difficulty, he could scarcely restrain a tear.

"You take me by surprise, James, I confess; unfortunately, I cannot do much, but the money my uncle left me is at my father's service."

"I knew it would be," replied James, "I told Mr. Evelyn so. Indeed, I asked him to apply to you, but the proposition made him quite angry. 'What,' said he, 'ask my poor boy for his all! Beggar him to save me? No! never!' 'Twas no use arguing the point, so I held my tongue; besides, sir, I really think it will be only a loan, and of course your father will repay you as soon as he is out of the wood."

"I fear I should not be in time for to-night's post," said Eveleyn, "but I will write to Wallace and Co. to-morrow, and tell them to sell out all I have in the funds, which is a thousand pounds, and to realise my mining and railway shares; the whole will amount to about three thousand five hundred pounds."

"That will suit nicely," said James, "and we shall do yet." Using the plural number, after the manner of all clerks, who have no beneficial interest in their employers' business.

Far from pleasing were Eveleyn's reflections as he walked home that evening. He seemed to have been hitherto living in a dream, and now the reality of life was dawning upon him. Educated in the manner we have described, his natural distaste for business strengthened every year, and fortunately, as he considered it, about a year before the time when he was introduced to the reader, his maternal uncle, whom he had never seen, bequeathed him a legacy of a little less than four thousand pounds, so that with his tastes he was quite independent, and looked forward to a life of ease and capricious reading. His passion for Kate Howard had prompted him to strive for fame. His double failure had both taught him experience, and dulled the edge of his ambition, leaving him still the possession of leisure, and an inclination for study; but now the information that James had given would probably effect a complete revolution in his material prospects.

He found his father as serene as usual, and wondered at the marvellous self-control he manifested.

Many a man wears a smiling face on 'Ch'áng who is a very devil at home. Even the cares of prosperous business affect the temper of the majority, so that they leave their urbanity in the office, and put on peevishness with their slippers. There are few examples of individuals who can bear reverse of fortune in its incipient stages, and calmly watch the lowering storm which will probably prove their destruction, without betraying it in a thousand ways at the fire-side, as if they were better able to bear the tempest without by a counteracting tempest within, or as though the sneers or malevolent pity or censures of society were rendered more endurable by establishing a bear-garden at home. True it is that sometimes physicians reduce inflammation by a blister, and the external irritation counteracts the internal fire.

Had Eveleyn not known of his father's difficulties from James, he never would have imagined that any catastrophe was to be apprehended. There was the same genial smile, the ever-loving glance, the unceasing interest in the pleasures and happiness of his children. Oh, it was worth some self-denial to preserve that sweet face of Lilla's untroubled, to exclude the presence of icy care from their cheerful home. The good old man (though his kindness might have been mistaken) bore his trial alone, as he thought. He did not distrust the greatness of his son's heart or the warmth of his affection, but he longed to spare him as much trouble as he could. Little did he know that his boy had already sustained a greater disappointment, a more

poignant grief than the prospect of pecuniary difficulty could inflict.

Eveleyn next morning gave the necessary instructions to Wallace and Co. to sell out, requesting them to hold the money from the consols until they had realized the other property, as he wished the total to be paid into Coutts's on the same day. This required a little time, and five days elapsed without his receiving a reply. During the interim he had watched his father narrowly; he could detect more seriousness of aspect—at least he fancied so; but as Mr. Eveleyn was never frivolous, it was hard to say that he had become more thoughtful, and yet his son knew from James that he was calmly awaiting the intelligence that his bankers had closed his account. Perhaps at times Eveleyn felt annoyed that his father had not confided in him; then, when he reflected that his reticence, however mistaken, arose from the dictates of affection, this feeling passed away.

On the sixth morning Mr. Evelyn went to his office with a heavy heart. Fortune was hard upon him; he, who had never been pinched in his life, was pressed for money in his old age. It was a severe trial nevertheless, he did not murmur.

He found his letters arranged as usual on his desk. One by one he turned them over, but when he had scanned the well-known handwriting of Coutts and Co., he trembled. The perspiration stood upon his forehead in drops; again he looked at it, and with an effort broke the seal. It ran thus:—

"London, August 17th, 18—.

"SIR,

"We beg to inform you that Messrs. Wallace and Co. have this day paid to the credit of your account with us the sum of three thousand six hundred and twenty-nine pounds.

"We remain

"Yours respectfully,

"MR. EVELYN."

COUTTS AND CO."

8 The first sensation was astonishment. "Who has done this?" A moment's thought gave him the answer—"My boy!" The tears stood full in the old man's eyes.

Father and son met as usual at dinner; Eveleyn had also received the advice of the payment of the money, but the subject was not alluded to until the family separated at night, when his father said to him, "Come with me into the office after breakfast to-morrow."

When they reached the office together at the appointed time, having shut the door, Mr. Evelyn began—"I need not ask you, my boy, from whence you learned the story of my embarrassment—James only could have told you; and all things considered, perhaps it was right that you should know the exact position of my affairs. For what you have so generously done"—the old man's voice quavered.

Eveleyn hastily interposed—"Do not allude to it, my dear father, I have only performed my duty,

Would that it had been in my power to have done more."

The father held out his hand, and the son grasped it. There was no other expression of thanks.

"At any rate, Eveleyn," said the old gentleman, "I will give you my acknowledgment for it."

"I will not take it, thank you; your word is more than enough," replied the son, and thus the point was settled.

"I had hoped," continued Mr. Evelyn, "to have tided over this difficulty, but every anchor that I trusted to either came home or broke. Six months ago I believed myself to be a rich man; I had intended that you should have been independent of business, and I meant to provide for Lilla and the boys comfortably. One after another, every hope failed me. The West India property, which once produced me a thousand a-year, has been decreasing in value annually, and for the last three years it has been utterly unremunerative. I had a round sum of money in the hands of Chapel Brothers, for which I drew on them some months ago. They have gone to smash, and will not pay eighteenpence in the pound. I had paid away their acceptance to meet some bills of my own falling due on account of tallow bought at St. Petersburg; so when they were returned, I was obliged to overdraw my account at Coutts's."

"Have you made a statement of your affairs lately?" asked Eveleyn.

"Yes."

“ And what is the result ?”

“ That I owe twenty-five thousand pounds, and have thirty to meet it ; that is to say, if my property was realized it would amount to that sum.”

“ How do you arrive at these figures ? I mean as to your assets.”

“ Oh, in this way—

	£
West Indies, Barbadoes estate, estimated at	5,000
Paper mill, plant, and stock in trade	2,000
Farming stock, &c.	1,500
Shares in Wheal mine	10,000
Stock of tallow in stores in London	5,000
Ditto in iron	3,000
Railway shares	3,000
Sundries—furniture, plate, &c.	500

I think you will find the total thirty thousand.”

“ It is always well to look everything in the face,” said Eveleyn. “ Cornish shares are difficult to dispose of, railway stock is depressed, and I fear you value the Barbadoes property too high ; but even if you have, there is a margin remaining, and I have no doubt we shall weather the storm. But for the future, my dear father, we must work in concert. With my youth and energy, coupled with your experience, all will be well.”

“ I quite agree with you,” said his father, “ and the firm must be Evelyn and Son for the future.”

Eveleyn smiled. It was worth more than the money he had advanced to hear the hopeful tone of his father's voice, and to see how his eye lighted at the prospect of

the closer business relation which for the future was to subsist between them.

All the morning was occupied in discussing mercantile matters; in the course of the conversation Mr. Evelyn remarked — "I fear that election affair will cost us dear. I did not anticipate at that time that the old mill was likely to become a necessity to us again; but if anything goes wrong, it will be our only stay. I made money there when I was your age, Eveleyn, and now you must do the same. It is a good business when looked after properly, but I fear I have been negligent in the matter. You must take my place, and see what can be done. If Salmon continues to refuse to renew the lease we shall be in a dilemma; but I cannot think he will persist in his resolution, although I heard that he had effected some long-desired change of farms with our Member, in consideration of his interest at the last election; at least, that is the current story."

"In that quarter," replied Eveleyn, "I have not much hope. It is surprising how obstinate weak men are, and I fear our landlord would do anything to gratify his spite; for, like most petty souls, he dotes on revenge, and boasts that he never forgives. I hope, however, before that time comes, we may succeed in finding a resting place in this old world; besides, no one can tell what changes may take place in the interim."

It was a pleasant family party that sat round the tea table that evening, in the old house at the top of Main Street. Lilla was bright and sparkling; she

had met Jack Hilton that afternoon, and he escorted her home.

Bob, who was taking kindly (as the old women say) to the profession of the healing art, had been complimented that afternoon on the skilful manner in which he had extracted a decayed tooth that had graced an old woman's jaw a few hours since, and now was repeatedly transferred from his pocket to the table, and vice-versa. So he was gratified and self-complacent.

Eveleyn enjoyed the peculiar satisfaction that ever attends the performance of a disinterested action; and not the least sprightly was Mr. Evelyn senior, from whose mind a load had been removed.

The harmless joke and genial pleasantry that prevailed would have thawed the heart of an ascetic, or smoothed the wrinkles out of a savoy cabbage.

When the tea equipage was removed,

"Bring out the chess-board, Eveleyn," said his father, "and see if I don't give you a thrashing."

They had not played for months. Eveleyn did not intend to beat, but he soon found it necessary to exercise his skill to secure a respectable defeat. He was really astonished:—"Why, father," said he, "you must have been practising privately—I haven't a chance with you."

"Check-mate," said Mr. Evelyn for the third time. "Put away the board, Bob. Lilla, hand me the Bible."

After prayers, which he had conducted with unusual solemnity, Mr. Evelyn said—"What blessed words

are those which I have been reading to you to-night—what words of hope and promise !

“ Herein Christ gives us a glimpse of the glories of heaven ; he tells his disciples that his Father’s house consists of many mansions, and that he goes to prepare a place for them.

“ What infinite condescension, that the Lord of heaven and earth should deign to bring our souls into the mansions of the Great King ! Oh, how great is his love towards us, that he has given us to know the way that leads to these celestial portals :—‘ Jesus said to the disciple—I am the way, the truth, and the life.’

“ Ye have known Christ, my dear children, and his way is a more excellent way than any other. All the paths of life are beset with thorns, and the goal to which they tend is the great deep—that outer darkness where the light of heaven shines not, and where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. Therefore seek not, I beseech you, the prizes of ambition which are hung out like glittering baits to tempt you. Seek not, I entreat you, to gather riches, for they are a snare ; seek not, I implore you, the pleasures of the world falsely so called, for oh, inexpressibly bitter is the fruit thereof ; but seek to know God. Let his image be before you ; strive to liken yourselves to him, as he has manifested himself to us in the flesh—meek, humble, lowly, beneficent, loving, lovely, and merciful. He was tempted as we are ; he felt the frailties of the flesh ; he suffered all the privations of the poor. Though inexpressibly greater than earth’s mightiest kings, he

was content to be called the carpenter's son ; he was arraigned as a felon, and suffered the death of a malefactor.

“ We are not called upon now to seal our faith on the cross or at the stake, but the disciple of Christ has nevertheless a daily battle, a perpetual contest, an unceasing bitter strife to wage ; so that even the purest may cry out with St. Paul—‘ Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ’ The answer is Christ—ever Christ. In him we may be more than conquerors.

“ These are grave truths ; we have many privileges, but in proportion to these advantages, so are our responsibilities ; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? I am growing old, my children, and sooner or later the summons will come for me to depart. It may be to-morrow, or it may be a year hence ; but in the course of nature it cannot be very long.

“ It seems hard even in idea to part from you, but our heavenly Father knoweth best. But whether my days may be lengthened or cut short, each of us has a like work to perform, in conforming himself to Christ.

“ He has said that our hearts are temples for the Divine Spirit. He has promised to manifest himself to those who love him, by entering in and possessing their souls. Never forget this, my children, that before you are truly Christ's, he must be in you.

“ Our eyes are often stretched upward to the vault of heaven, and though we see his glory there, we only gaze upon the reflection of his majesty. Some may with the eye of faith look farther still, until they pic-

ture to themselves the wondrous scenes that John witnessed. Others may wait in expectation of that awful day when Christ shall come in glory to judgment. But, as is often the case in natural things, in straining for the far-off, we overlook that which is nearer and more beautiful; and so we need not let our vision range from earth to heaven in search of the divinity, for, lo! he is within us—in the hearts of those who love him, and keep his commandments; as he said to Judas :—‘ If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.’ Oh then give up the vain companionship of the world, for the priceless privilege of living in perpetual and personal communion with God. Then we shall all meet together around his glorious throne, where there will be no bonds of love broken, no tearful separations, no doubts as to the assured glory of those we love. Yes, there will be fulness—fulness of joy for evermore. Amen.”

Eveleyn’s heart was sad; whatever he may have been, he felt that he was no longer in the divine likeness, but that his soul was being gradually moulded after a fearful image.

Even Bob, who was of sterner stuff than any of the family, was touched, and Lilla sat weeping.

“ Come here, my darling,” said her father; and the young girl ran across the room, and flung her arms round his neck, her tears falling on his shoulder.

“ Do not cry, dear! You should rather smile joy-

ously ; there is nothing distressing in religion to those who are pure in heart—it has such blessed promises, it is so full of hope. Let us rather thank God, and look forward to the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.”

She lay awhile upon his heart, and the old man gently pressed his daughter to him. When she became calm, he kissed her affectionately, saying, “ You had better go to bed now, dear. Good-night ! and you (to Bob), it is time you were moored in blanket bay.”

“ Good-night, father,” said Bob.

“ Good-night, my boy,” and Bob and his sister left the room.

“ That is a tender child, Eveleyn ! you must deal very gently with her when I am gone.”

“ I hope, father,” said he, “ that I do not even need your admonition to do so. The dictates of my heart would forbid my being unkind to Lilla. But why is your mind running so much on these subjects, when, with your good health and sound constitution, you may (considering the uncertainty of life) outlive me yet ?”

“ That is the point, my son, this uncertainty. I do so love you all, that I trust God, in his mercy, may spare me yet awhile. But his will be done. Will you bring me in my slippers ?”

Eveleyn instantly obeyed : when he returned, his father said, “ I feel very sleepy,” and he leaned his head on his hand.

“ Don’t sleep in the arm-chair,” said his son, “ it will spoil your night’s rest.”

The old man looked up and smiled, again closed his eyes, and sank back in the chair.

Eveleyn waited a moment or two, then taking him by the hand, he said, "Come, dear, I must awake you." There was no response. "Father!" no answer. "Are you ill, dear?" no reply; he let go the hand—it dropped helplessly; he looked—the spirit had returned to God who gave it.

For the first time in his life, Eveleyn stood in the presence of death—awful, mysterious death; and he who lay dead his father.

Oh! bitter, bitter hour—tongue cannot tell—no words can paint its bitterness, it passeth speech, and there is no expression for it, but they who have passed through the ordeal know well what loving hearts suffer when the light of their eyes is hid.

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH.

MEDICAL men were sent for, but they came in vain. There lay the tabernacle of the spirit, an empty shrine.

In the wild excitement of battle the comrade is struck down beside his fellow, and he heeds it not ; the very terrors of the destroying angel lose their fearfulness by repetition. Not so when the summons removes a loved member from the family circle, especially when it comes without warning, like a thief in the night, severing the bonds of love, replacing joy with grief, and substituting tears for smiles.

It is an old, old tale, but it never loses its interest; while there remains a life to perish, its freshness must continue.

There were tears and wild bursts of grief in that house. The three children sat hand in hand, while Lilla at the same time threw one arm round her eldest brother. Vain are all words of comfort. Eveleyn felt it, and so did the others ; Lilla had a nervous dread of seeing a corpse, and she could not look upon her parent's body. After some hours, old Williams per-

suaded her to retire to rest, and then the boys descended to the parlour, where the remains lay upon a mattress, neatly covered with a sheet. The last sad offices had been performed, and he who a few hours before was instinct with life and apparent health, was now indifferent to all earthly changes, and unresponsive to the grief of those around him. Perhaps that feeling is hardest to bear, that one who has ever sympathized with you, hoped with your hope, feared with your fear, and given back your love perchance with interest, can no longer reciprocate your emotions, or testify his regard for your affection.

The sons uncovered their father's face, and stood looking at it in silence. Oh, it was very hard to believe that he was no longer with them, when he only seemed sleeping—sleeping so sweetly, calm as an infant, a gentle smile on his lips, as if it were the expression of everlasting rest and peace.

"Eveleyn! Eveleyn!" said Bob, completely overcome, "lead me out, dear."

It was the first time that his elder brother had ever heard him use that term before; but death, the death of those we love, often awakes unsuspected tenderness, tenderness not the less true and genuine because it lies so deep.

Eveleyn brought the boy up to his room, stayed with him while he undressed, joined with him in supplication, and prepared to leave.

"Don't blow out the candle, Eveleyn, please!" A mysterious awe pervaded the house; the boy, commonly

so bold, felt it, and could not endure the idea of being left in darkness.

Again Eveleyn returned to the solemn chamber, where a solitary candle flickered in its socket ; replacing it with another, he took his stand beside the corpse.

We have before spoken of the affection of father and son ; but until now Eveleyn never knew how much he loved him. Then came up in long array the memory of every act that had given his parent pain ; and although he had been what the world terms a dutiful son, yet now, when he could do no more to show his love, when he could perform no greater kindness, nor give any more marked proof of the depth and sincerity of his filial love, he felt how inadequately he had performed all the duties that devolved upon him.

Death is the hour when self-reproach has the sharpest sting ; when a world would be given for an hour's converse, or even to hear the words of forgiveness for injury done. Death is the hour when acts of past unkindness to the dead are fully appreciated, and even appear more heinous than they were ; when hasty words, perchance forgotten, or hitherto unrepented of, flood the memory, and unavailing regrets embitter the sorrow of the heart.

Eveleyn stood beside the body, gazing on the placid countenance. As yet he had been perfectly composed ; the shock had partly stupefied him, and there was also the necessity of being calm for the sake of those who looked up to him.

But now there was no other to be depressed by the

sight of his emotion, he sat down on a chair, and man though he was, he cried bitterly, till his frame shook as if with an ague. "O God! O God!" he cried, "now that thou hast taken him from me, I know the value of the treasure I have lost; now I know I adored him."

When the servants entered the room at daylight, they found Eveleyn still watching, and it was with some difficulty that they persuaded him to go up stairs and lie down.

Mr. Evelyn's death created quite a sensation in the town. There was no one more respected than him, and the suddenness of his removal brought the fact home more pointedly to his friends and neighbours.

Endless were the inquiries after the family, some from genuine sympathy, more because it was expected; and people are never so sensitive to kindness, or more alive to neglect, than at seasons of this kind.

Those who were most intimate called and offered their services, none of which however, were accepted. Before the funeral, letters also poured in by every post, all bearing the same high testimony to the worth of the deceased.

The nearest members of the Society of Friends were communicated with. If they wished to attend the funeral, Eveleyn wrote that he would be pleased to see them, at least as many as he could accommodate. George obtained leave from his office to be present on the sad occasion, which was fixed for the day sennight of Mr. Evelyn's decease.

The Society of Friends do not wear mourning. Eveleyn and his brothers and sister were not in membership, so all that devolved on them was to be as true to the spirit of their father's wishes as possible; consequently everything was conducted in the plainest manner. All the ridiculous paraphernalia of hired woe was discarded; the odious black coaches, drunken mutes, and dyed horses were dispensed with; no mockery of scarfs and hatbands offended the eye, and as the distance was short, the hands from the mill bore the remains to their resting place. The three sons, arm in arm, followed on foot, accompanied by nearly every respectable inhabitant in Bricklinton, and very many from the neighbourhood and a distance. The old women who always attend funerals to enjoy a good snivel, said "it was the largest one they had ever seed." Ministers of different denominations, both of the establishment and dissenters, were present, most of the shops were closed, and a general gloom pervaded the streets.

Amid the solemn hush of the crowd who filled the yard, a Friend, after the body had been lowered to the bottom of the grave, offered up a short prayer, and then they all adjourned to the meeting house—at least as many as could get in, the crowd was so great.

Again the deep and solemn silence stole over the assembly, and if all hearts did not rise in spiritual worship to the Great Spirit, there were many who felt his presence within them, speaking peace to their souls.

Another Friend now spoke, and though he referred to the dead, there was no extravagant eulogy, for the

members of the Society believe it is a man's duty to live to God, and for performing that duty, which is his only reasonable service, the post-mortem praise of his fellow-men is supererogatory. He alluded to the well-known character and the many virtues of the deceased, concluding with the assertion that he had faith to believe that the dear departed had found acceptance through Christ, and urged on his hearers the necessity of watchfulness and prayer.

Full many a worshipper there that morning acknowledged in his heart that in the absence of stereotyped form on such occasions there is a truth, a grandeur, a sublimity far surpassing all arranged services ; in silent worship the soul, as it were, speaks face to face with its Maker, as a man speaks to his friend ; each in his own manner, for only the spirit knows what spiritual sustenance it needs.

CHAPTER V.

THE WILL.

WHILE we have the dead with us, we feel that we are not altogether desolate. Though the lips are sealed and the eyes are closed, at least the form is there, sleeping, only sleeping; the lineaments we loved, the stately person we admired, are still there—all is not lost, every tie is not severed. But when the tramp of feet bearing a heavy burden through the hall is heard, and the low murmur of whispered voices is hushed, as the mourners pass out into the street, and away to the quiet grave-yard; then is the reality present to us in all its solemn truth, and the full meaning of death is understood indeed.

Men are said to have grown grey in a single night. The few last days added years to Eveleyn; his youth was matured into sedate manhood at a bound. He was now the head of his family; he stood *in loco parentis*; a sister and two brothers looked up to him for counsel and protection, and business responsibilities, hitherto unsuspected, bore heavily upon his mind.

Near relations he had none, so the morning after the funeral, in the presence of Jack Hilton, the will was

read. Its contents surprised everybody ; and Master Bob, who had precocious notions of the value of money, and the privileges it confers on its possessors, was in no small degree chagrined. It was not drawn up in technical language, and ran thus—

“My dear children, I once thought to have bequeathed to each of you sufficient money to render you independent of business. In this I have been disappointed. Having anxiously debated in my own mind how I can best secure your general advantage, and having ascertained, from a late inspection of my accounts, that, were all my property realized, in the present position of affairs it would little more than suffice to pay all my debts, I deem it advisable that no such division should be made ; and having perfect confidence in my son, Eveleyn Evelyn, I have determined that he shall stand in the place of a father to his sister and brothers. Therefore I bequeath to my son, Eveleyn Evelyn, my estate in Barbadoes ; my interest in all my household property, the furniture of my dwelling-house, all moneys whatever, the whole of my stock in trade, and everything that I possess, wherever it may be found, except my watch and chain to my son, Robert Evelyn ; my bunch of seals and cabinet of curiosities to my son, George Evelyn ; and my portrait to my daughter, Lilla Evelyn.

“I desire that my son, Eveleyn Evelyn, shall exercise the sole and entire control of the whole of my estate. In investing him with complete and full authority, I believe he will not deal selfishly with his family, or

cause one member to regret that I have conferred such powers on him. My last request to him is as follows :—

“Eveleyn, my first-born, you have ever been a dutiful child, and I know that your faithfulness will not cease with my life ; to you I entrust the conduct of my affairs—to you I leave the care of my children ; let your love for me dictate your treatment of them. And so God bless you !

“My dear children, this my last will and testament may not fulfil your expectations at first. Of this be assured, I love you all equally, and it is not because he is nearer to my heart than either of you that I make your eldest brother my sole executor. The future will show you that I have determined wisely in making this distribution of my property.

“Farewell, until we meet in heaven.”

The will was duly signed and attested, and was dated the twelfth of August, the day on which he had entered into an explanation of his affairs with his son, and the day of his death.

The little party sat in mute astonishment for some time. Lilla was the first to break silence.

“It is just as it should be,” she said ; “Evy will do right ;” and getting up from her chair, she walked round the table to where he sat, with his hands covering his face, and kissed him. He looked up, a bright light beaming in his eye.

“God help me ! I will try !” said he.

“It’s hard upon us young ones,” growled Bob.

"Hush, Robert," said George; "you know you can depend on Eveleyn."

"I must tell you," said Eveleyn, "the morning on which our poor father died he entered into a long explanation with me as to the state of his affairs. I had heard from James, for the first time, a few days previously, that in consequence of the failure of Merault and Co., of Rouen, and Chapel Brothers, of Bristol, he was seriously embarrassed; and it was then arranged that the firm should for the future be carried on as Evelyn and Son. From the statement my father made, supposing his calculations should prove to be correct, I doubt not that we shall weather the storm. It will, however, require attention on my part, and mutual sacrifices on every side. Of this fact you may all be assured, I shall consider myself only as my father's steward."

Bob, boy though he was, was not yet satisfied.

"Eveleyn," said he, "has four thousand pounds of his own, that uncle left him, and now he has got all father's property, and we are beggars."

"Bob," said his brother, "I am very sorry you are displeased; your discontent obliges me to mention a fact that I intended should remain unknown. Every farthing of my property has already been absorbed. It was paid in to Coutts' to father's credit only three days before his death, and he was acquainted with the fact the morning on which he made his will."

Even Bob was satisfied.

Truly onerous were the responsibilities that devolved

upon Eveleyn. Hilton was his professional adviser, and gave him every assistance. The first step was to prove the will. Then all the correspondents had to be made acquainted with the change that had taken place, and that the business would be carried on as usual. James, the clerk, had all the accounts in the most admirable order, so there was no difficulty in ascertaining precisely how the balance stood, which, from the circumstances already named, was heavily on the wrong side. A journey to London was necessary to arrange Coutts and Co.'s account. The firm proved very considerate, and being satisfied as to the security, they agreed to grant further accommodation if required, thereby securing the credit of the deceased, and relieving his executor of a load of anxious thought.

The necessary legal forms having been gone through, and probate granted, Eveleyn set about ascertaining his true position, consulting with James. The result was that a considerable deduction had to be made from his father's calculation. Money was very tight, the bank rate of discount being ten per cent. It was one of those periodical crises that sweep over the mercantile world like a tropical hurricane, spreading devastation on all sides, and vibrating through every part of the kingdom.

The tallow and iron, estimated at eight thousand pounds, when sold only netted six thousand eight hundred and fifty. The mining and railway shares were also low; and had the former been sold at once, there would have been a loss of twenty per cent.; so

he determined to hold them. But it was indispensable that he should raise some money; consequently he mortgaged the West India property, and succeeded in getting four thousand five hundred pounds on it. Estimating the shares at a fair price (which they eventually realized), he found that by the time all demands were met, nothing would be left but the lease of the dwelling-house and furniture, the paper-mill, the stock in trade, and about one hundred pounds in cash. This represented the whole of his capital—not a large fortune for a man of refined tastes, educated in the expectation of inheriting a comfortable independence.

His first determination was to concentrate his efforts on one department; so he made up his mind to get rid of the farm, and fortunately found a respectable person to take it, with the stock and crop, at a valuation, thus realizing that part of his capital. He also thought it advisable to abandon those large mercantile transactions in which his father had made so much money at one time; indeed, this resolve was a matter of necessity, unless he had conducted his operations on borrowed capital, an idea he abhorred, judging wisely that a small certainty is to be preferred to greater gains at disproportionately increased risks. Accordingly, he was enabled to reduce his establishment, and paid off all the clerks save James.

In his father's time, at least during the last few years, the paper-mill had been considered of secondary importance, and had not received the amount of atten-

tion it deserved. Many improvements in machinery had been made, whereby the cost of production was diminished, and the facility of manufacturing the commodity increased. Very few of those advantages had been availed of, consequently the returns were small, amounting to two hundred and eighty pounds per annum, being Eveleyn's entire income.

James behaved very nobly. "Mr. Eveleyn," said he, one day, "everything that I possess I owe to your father; to him I am under greater obligations than I can express, and it becomes my duty, in the altered position of your affairs, to say that I cannot accept the same salary as heretofore, and request that you reduce it fifty pounds."

It was more than Eveleyn expected. "It is a very handsome proposition on your part, James," said he, "but it is exceedingly painful to my feelings to deprive you of what you so richly deserve. Still, as so many heavy expenses must be incurred by me, I accept your offer, on condition that, if my Barbadoes property becomes remunerative, I will again raise your income."

This concession enabled him to calculate on receiving rather more than three hundred a-year, out of which sum he had to provide for George, who as yet only obtained a salary of thirty pounds from his employer, leaving at least seventy to be made up by his brother. Robert's professional education, though not very costly while he remained at home, would become expensive as soon as his hospital course commenced, and Eveleyn

had also to provide for Lilla and himself, so he could not calculate on laying money by.

Much depended on the Barbadoes estate. As we have seen, he had raised a mortgage on it, the interest of which amounted to two hundred and seventy pounds. It was more than probable that he would receive a larger sum from it annually, so that he might hope to redeem the debt; at the same time there was a possibility of the profits being less than the interest; in that case his embarrassment would be serious.

Without anticipating the worst, neither entirely overlooking any unfortunate eventuality, he calculated that he and Lilla would be able to live, educate Bob, and support George until the two latter could take care of themselves, on the proceeds of the mill, the lease of which would probably last long enough to enable Bob to obtain his diploma, when George's services would become more valuable. After that? What? He could not tell. There was enough to do in the interim, if all was accomplished in that period of time which might reasonably be done.

Not a very brilliant prospect—three hundred a-year for four or five years, then some two thousands pounds capital, and a debt in the West Indies, out of which to provide for a family of five, and at the same time to maintain the position of gentlefolks, or first-class provincial tradesmen.

As soon as every arrangement was complete, he explained his position to his sister and the boys. He could rely on their discretion, and feeling the disad-

vantage of being kept in ignorance of his father's financial affairs, he judiciously profited by the mistake, and thought it wiser to have no family secrets. Disappointing as the communication was, it taught Lilla the necessity of being prudent ; it showed Bob how his future position depended on his energy and exertion ; and it stimulated George to earn the favourable opinion of his employers, whereby his chance of promotion was increased.

What a change a few short weeks had made ; from an independent man, engaged in his favourite profession, with enough to do to give him occupation, allowing him also plenty of time for study, with horses to ride, partridges to shoot, poetry to write, and a flirtation to amuse him, he was transformed into a plodding man of business, poring over account books, weighing or checking the weight of rags, and superintending their manufacture into brown and blue paper. A load of responsibility on his shoulders, three young people dependent on him, a small and diminishing property, and a heavy mortgage to pay off.

No wonder that the lines deepened on his forehead, and his brows contracted oftener than their wont. No wonder that he came home at night weary and often desponding ; no wonder that the time for study was curtailed, and the muse, for the present, at least, abandoned ; no wonder that in the stern race for bread he had more sober thoughts than when he dangled after Mrs. Aylmer ; no wonder that the solemn scene he had witnessed in his father's death had left an in-

effaceable impression on his mind, and had awakened a resolution to walk in a straighter path.

Sacrifices he had made, but already he had a part of his reward. His father's mercantile honour was untarnished, the malicious had not the power to raise a sneer ; the old servants remained, and the dear old house was unchanged. His family regarded him as a parent, and, above all, his own heart was at rest. Neither was he without hope that a brighter future was in store for him ; and though he had lost much, more still remained ; and when he contrasted his own position with that of many others, he acknowledged that God had not judged him according to his sins, or rewarded him according to his iniquities.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE scandal of which Levinge was the cause having occurred when Mr. Evelyn was lying dead, the news had not made so deep an impression on his son as it otherwise would have done. Under other circumstances probably the hope of winning Kate Howard's love might have returned, but now that he was reduced to the condition of a poor man, it would have been madness. Indeed, in his position, he could not dream of calling any girl wife for years to come, even if he knew one whom he might wish to marry; and as he was fancy free and without a certain income, he banished the idea from his mind. A bachelor's life did not appear to him the happiest, but he would make the best of it, and Lilla was a charming housekeeper.

At the conventional time Lilla and Eveleyn sat up to receive their acquaintance. Why the term sitting up should be used is not easily explicable, as people generally sit down when they occupy a chair, and we never witnessed a deviation from this time-honoured practice on occasions when condolences are paid and received.

The usual string of sympathising and non-sympathising folks called, made the inevitable observations, and would have gone next door to congratulate a bride and bridegroom, had there been one, with like urbanity and sincerity. To the Evelyns they said, "In the midst of life we are in death;" to the newly-married they would have wished all the happiness earth can afford; and as soon as they found themselves in the street, they criticised Lilla's mourning, and with a spirit of impartiality they would have abused the wine and called the bridegroom vulgar.

The good people, however, had plenty to discuss in the mystery which hung around Mr. Evelyn's will. The only person who knew its contents out of the family was Hilton, and as he was unmarried, there was no chance of the particulars being made known. The personality only represented a portion of the property, and the probate duty threw little light on the subject. So rumour reigned supreme, and a hundred different stories were circulated in Bricklington.

Among the really sympathizing visitors was Mrs. Aylmer. She had seen a good deal of Mr. Evelyn, and his sweetness of manner rendered him a great favourite with her. Then we are always more or less interested in what concerns those whom we have a great regard for, and such an important event as his father's death, would doubtless affect the fortunes of Eveleyn in no small degree. It would either fetter or free him. It would make or mar him; he would rise into a higher life, or fall to a lower level, and either change



would affect her happiness. Mrs. Aylmer was a sympathizing friend, because she sympathized with herself. Very natural! All our best actions spring from self, the motive to benevolence is self, to virtue and goodness, self, and to all that St. Paul calls charity; moreover, paradoxical as it may appear, abnegation of self is selfishness in another form, and this is so from a law of nature. All our actions have their origin in some motive, and if we consider those which are denominated good, we find that we perform them because they will either afford us pleasure at the time, or entitle us to be ranked as practical Christians, and thus ensure us the Christian's reward; and farther, it is the fear of hell, more than the love of heaven, that stimulates our self-sacrifices. A personal being, man never sinks his personality, never in his highest flights leaves it altogether behind; some have larger hopes and purer aims, but still they never pass beyond the bounds of the circle of which the personal pronoun is the centre.

Mrs. Aylmer was not slow in perceiving that a change had come over Eveleyn. His eye did not light up when she greeted him, his hand dropped lifeless in hers, and his manner was constrained. He studiously avoided a *tête-à-tête*, and as he spent his whole day at the mill, it was only at rare intervals that she saw him. He had seen the chasm yawning at his feet, wherein fame, honour, and honesty would be entombed, and had started back in horror, in all the pious selfishness of virtuous egotism. He judged wisely in so doing; he acted from a sense of right, the gates of repentance

were still open ; within them, for himself at least, there was peace and rest, and a goodly hope ; without, were liars, hypocrites, &c., and a passionate woman with whom he had trifled. But what course, other than this, was open to him ? Surely it was solitary and selfish to save himself alone. But would the lady have repented to please him, have sought to win back purity of thought and sincerity of heart, because he shunned the consequences of evil, and shook at the terrors of the law ?

It is no easy task for a good-looking young fellow to attempt the conversion of a lovely married woman who has confessed to a *grande passion*, which he has listened to sympathizingly. Once let sentiment overcome prudence, once forget the memorable example of the son of Jacob, and woe betide you !

Moreover, Eveleyn was by no means indifferent to Mrs. Aylmer's preference. She was far too good-looking and too accomplished for a lover of the beautiful and the witty in women not to be pleased if she smiled on him. He had not risen to that height at which the intellectual overpowers the animal, and the pursuit of knowledge is loved only for itself, and takes precedence over every other earthly love.

He had not ascended the Mount of Transfiguration, where the sensual is lost in the spiritual ; he was still a man, a young, impulsive man, to whom the lower life of terrestrial existence has charms, which when within reach, though known to be worthless, nevertheless fascinate the mind, overpower the judgment, and too often wreck the soul.

When he reflected on his past folly, he felt as myriads have felt before him, and as myriads will feel, the terrible consequences of one error, of one false step. It is the first drop of water that oozes through the embankment, harmless and innocent as it appears, so easily rectified, with such facility excluded, that prepares the way for the ruin of the fabric; the drop trickles faster, runs in a silver thread, grows into a stream, swells into a flood, when the torrent rushes in, and sweeps everything before it.

What could he do more than save himself? Willingly would he have adopted any scheme that promised hopefully; but no! the very position in which he stood rendered every other course impracticable, save for him to abandon her, and give her into the charge of her good angels.

Not so Mrs. Aylmer. She was not to be taken up and set down as a plaything. The pent-up affection of years had carried her away into that limbo of neutral ground, the watershed of vice and virtue, and she was perfectly indifferent to the future.

One evening, about a month after his father's death, he was returning in the twilight from the mill; his path lay along the bank of the mill-stream, and was covered in with arching ash, which formed an avenue of foliage. The mill was about a mile and a half out of the town, and the trees extended at least an eighth of the distance, half of which he had passed, when he saw a figure approaching. At first he hardly noticed it, as he imagined it was one of the mill girls, but as she drew nearer a sensation told him it was Mrs. Aylmer.

To retreat or avoid her was alike impossible.

"Good evening; I suppose you have come out to enjoy the freshness of the air?"

"Is it fresh?" said Mrs. Aylmer.

"Yes, I think so."

"Then it cannot last in this neighbourhood; and if it could, it would not be appreciated."

"Why?"

"Because novelty only has any charm here."

"I do not know that in this respect Clayshire differs from other parts of the world."

"I quite agree with you; the absence of any difference renders it as intolerable as the rest of the globe."

"You speak in enigmas."

"You shall not accuse me of that any longer. Eveleyn, you are changed."

"Thank God!" was the short reply.

"Heaven scorns the gratitude that is offered at the expense of an insult to a woman."

"Mrs. Aylmer! Mrs. Aylmer! I do not understand you. I insult a woman, and that woman yourself—never!"

"And what is it but an insult to acknowledge solemnly that it is a matter of congratulation that you have won and then despised a woman's love? Mr. Evelyn, you have cruelly used me, and you know it. You, with your calculating cautiousness, never committed yourself in words, but there is another language which reaches farther than the voice—the language of looks, of marked attention, and studied preference; in

this manner you have spoken to me, again and again, and you cannot deny it. You know that you led me on ; you know that you have used all those gentle arts which are so fatal to my sex, and now, forsooth, when it suits your purpose, you throw me aside like a faded boquet, and salve your conscience with the coward's balm, 'It is not my fault'—'Poor thing! I cannot help her loving me!'"

"I confess," said Eveleyn, with apparent coolness, "your reproaches are not undeserved ; but if in judging me you had not altogether thrown charity aside, you might have been equally truthful and less severe. Is it wiser, having discovered your error, to abandon or retain it? Do not imagine that I am the heartless wretch you describe me ; do not believe that this change in my conduct has cost me no struggle. In listening to the voice of reason I am not deaf to the murmurs of feeling. The past is irrevocable ; let us abandon our folly while we are capable of doing so."

"Yes," said Mrs. Aylmer, "it is easy for you to turn upon your heel, your calmer blood does not disturb the balance of judgment ; but when a woman breaks down the barrier of reserve and lays bare the secrets of her heart, once she has thrown aside that protection, she never looks behind her ; peace may be there and destruction before her, but she heeds not ; honour or dishonour, life or death—her love becomes her all."

"Speak not so wildly, Mrs. Aylmer, for mercy's sake ! every word of yours stabs me, and the torment

of self-reproach is terrible. But I deserve it all ; mine was the stronger will, mine the clearer judgment, mine the foresight of evil ; I might have saved you, but my selfish vanity and pleasure led me on."

Had he adopted a vindictory tone she would not have spared the lash ; by taking the responsibility on himself, he changed the whole current of her feelings. "Oh, Eveleyn !" she exclaimed, in a low, impassioned tone, "forgive my wicked words ; you have not erred—you are not responsible for my weakness. I am the elder, and the more experienced. I saw it all from the beginning, and should have crushed the thought. But, O God ! it is so sweet to believe that you are loved by one whom you love ! Oh, it is an intoxicating joy, an irresistible delight ! Oh, cast me not off ! there is nothing on earth that I care for but your love ! Oh, forgive me ! I know not what I am saying ! I know it is indelicate, it is sinful, and it must cause you to despise me. I have hitherto borne all my burden calmly, but I cannot sustain it longer."

It was terribly embarrassing—what could he say ? All his high resolves were melting. They reached the end of the trees, and both instinctively turned. "Mrs. Aylmer," said Eveleyn, "we have both erred ; shall we continue to yield submission to this madness ? Listen : since that afternoon when this subject was first broached between us, I have gained more experience than I ever had before. I have seen the great mystery of life enacted ; I have been present when a soul has gone forth to God ; I have seen the death of him whom

I ever loved, and shall ever love, with a purer, holier, and more enduring affection than aught else can ever inspire. I say, I have seen the pure in heart die: believe me, it is an awful sight, though an instructive one. And how did he die? Without a moment's notice or a passing idea (as far as we can tell) that the messenger was coming. In one moment the centre of our most cherished affections, the joy, the stay, the delight of our house, loved, honoured, and revered; in the next, in the presence of the Great King. Oh, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! It is madness to risk eternity for anything on earth; better tear out your heart and trample it under foot than play fast and loose with Heaven. Mrs. Aylmer, I have entertained for you too deep a regard; the pleasure of your society has fascinated me—I have yielded to weakness. Now my strength has returned, and cost me what it may, I will extinguish this false sentiment before it is too late, and you and I become loathed monuments of scorn. Mrs. Aylmer, for the love of Heaven, let it not be said in the last day that I destroyed you."

She heard him to the end. "Oh, selfish man," said she, "now that which you value most is your poor shivering soul, and therefore to secure its safety you will sacrifice mine."

"Sacrifice you, Mrs. Aylmer!—no, but I would save you."

"Think you," said she, in reply, "that my affections are your slaves, that you can give them freedom, or fetter them in the bonds of conventional propriety when-

soever it seems good in your sight? You have raised a spirit that you cannot quell, you have trifled with a power that you cannot control, and you are terrified."

"Spare me! spare me!" he cried; "where will it end?"

There was no reply, and the two walked on in silence. One argument yet remained—it was an intensely selfish one—but he thought it might eventually result in good. "Mrs. Aylmer, if, as you say, you really love me, will you prove it?"

"Yes, I will."

"Then if you value my happiness, if you would give me peace on earth, if you would render existence bearable, try and overcome this passion."

"In other words," said Mrs. Aylmer, "sacrifice all that I value, even that which is dearer to me than life, for your sake."

Eveleyn paused a moment, it seemed so heartless; at length he said in a low tone, "Even so."

Mrs. Aylmer bowed her head and remained silent. Evidently it was with difficulty that she was able to walk. Eveleyn offered her his support. She refused it; but he saw that she required assistance, so he drew her hand within his arm, and then he found that she trembled like a leaf.

Neither spoke again that evening. Conducting her to her door, he saw her safely in, and shortly after reached his own home, conscious that he was among the basest of mankind.

CHAPTER VII.

A BOARD MEETING.

WHEN Levinge reached London, he fancied he had travelled beyond the range of Clayshire scandal.

Town was empty, the clubs almost deserted, the opera shut up, the Court in Scotland, and the ministers nowhere.

Rumour, however, had outstripped his movements, and the story of his abortive marriage had been the chief topic among the old fogies during the past week, some of whom cut him, while others shook hands, and abused him when his back was turned.

"What a d—d fool he must have been," said old F. No. 1.

"I never heard of anything so badly managed in my life," replied No. 2.

No. 1. "He might have married the heiress, and kept the other young one quiet."

No. 2. "Some say he is married to the girl."

No. 1. "All a d—d lie, you may depend! He never would have run such a risk."

No. 2. "He's a slippery dog!"

No. 1. "I used to think highly of him, as a man

of talent and ingenuity ; but really, from his management of this affair, I must have been mistaken."

No. 2. "Will he retain his seat, think you?"

No. 1. "There's deuced little virtue in the House of Commons, but there is some regard for decency, and herein he has offended."

No. 2. "Ah ! very well—very good. Where do you dine to-day?"

So the subject dropped. The two old fogies had their own standard notions of right and wrong ; their gospel was propriety. If anyone preached or practised any other social rules than those they lived by, let him be anathema maranatha. Not that their code was very exacting on the score of virtue ; their chief guide was human nature's law, summed up in one sentence, "Do anything you like that can be conducted with due regard to appearance."

Like all conscience-smitten sinners, Levinge was keenly alive to every slight, which he now for the first time in his life thought it better not to resent. So he chafed secretly, and gloated over the frailties of those he knew, old and young respectabilities, who passed current because daylight had never dawned on their deeds. Could he have had one wish, it would have been to have enjoyed the death of Samson Agonistes—to have put all his enemies, in other words all those who judged him rightly, in one building, and to have dragged it down on them.

The morning after his arrival in town he drove to the city. It was a board day at the Cosmopolitan Bank,

and he wished to see Smith before the other directors arrived. That gentleman greeted him rather coldly—not that he was particularly shocked by his partner's conduct, but because he was horribly disgusted that he had missed the heiress, whose property would have been, to a certain extent, a security for his debt to the bank.

“What report do you bring from Lemford, Mr. Levinge?”

“Prosperous, on the whole, I must confess,” was the reply. “We are making a good deal of iron, but we cannot get coal enough. Jones tells me that the ‘fault’ baffles him. The ground is more broken than he expected, and it will be necessary to strike off from the end of the incline right into the centre of the hill, where there is an inexhaustible supply. Under these circumstances we shall require thirty thousand pounds more.”

“Then,” said the manager, “the works must stop for the present. Money is fearfully tight; the bank rate of discount is ten per cent., and the safest firms are rapidly approaching Queer Street.”

“Ahem!” said Levinge—“but the works must go on!”

“Do you know the amount of the balance against the works now?”

“Yes; one hundred and sixty thousand pounds altogether. But I will pay you that amount now. I will give you my acceptance, which you can discount, and charge me for the accommodation, so that you will

have between five and six thousand to enter as profit."

The manager had no option, so the calculation was made, Smith observing, "You must submit to a higher rate of interest. We shall charge you eight thousand pounds, interest and discount."

"Very well," said Levinge, "so that you provide the sum I before named, for which I will give you my note."

"Impossible, sir!"

"Why impossible? There is ten thousand pounds' worth of iron on the canal bank now, only we cannot find a purchaser."

"Well," said Smith, with a sigh, "suppose you say twenty?"

Seeing that there was little chance of getting a larger sum, the owner of the Lemford works assented, signed his name, and received the cash.

"I fear," said the manager, "the other directors will censure my conduct."

"Pooh!" replied Levinge, "I will carry you through. Let us adjourn to the board-room."

One by one Levinge's brethren of the directorate dropped in, their faces marvellously elongated.

"Bad news," said one; "Everett, Marshman and Co. have stopped payment."

"So I heard," said another. Then the state of the money-market was feelingly discussed, and the probable result of the pressure on certain houses.

A body of medical men would not have entered more

minutely into the question of symptoms than they did. So-and-so were shaky ; So-and-so got on without difficulty ; the failure of others was imminent. In this manner they gossiped, just as town folks do in cholera times, the only difference being between financial and physical death, and all acknowledged that the plague was contagious.

Mr. Smith now made his appearance, followed by a couple of clerks carrying account books. The chairman took his seat, and the business commenced. One by one the different accounts were examined ; and as four-fifths of the directors were indebted to the Bank, they, in the first place, disposed of their other clients.

"I fear, Mr. Smith," said the Chairman, "that for the future we must be a little more discreet in our arrangements with the Bank ; indeed, I feel bound to say, from the very unhealthy state of the money-market, we may consider ourselves in a precarious position ; not that I apprehend any real difficulty ; but it is a duty we owe to the shareholders, to be careful of their interests. For myself, although my account is a small one, under existing circumstances I should not dream of swelling the balance against me, which now amounts to fifteen thousand three hundred and nineteen pounds six shillings and eleven-pence three-farthings, although I consider, from the high rate of freights (the chairman was a ship-builder), that shipping property will maintain its present high value, and therefore my security is good for double the amount of my balance. But, gentlemen," said he, emphatically, and with ad-

mirable candour, considering he could not have paid ten shillings in the pound if pressed, "‘security’ must be our motto !”

In like manner each of the directors who were indebted to the Bank defended his own position, when his balance was stated ; and remembering that the mercantile world was in the agonies of a crisis, it was really very encouraging to know that there were so many flourishing firms who were customers of the Cosmopolitan. At last it came to Levinge’s turn ; a smile lit up the eyes of the chairman when he saw in the pound column a line of four figures headed with an eight standing as profit. But when he continued his inspection, his face grew longer, assuming a pea-green hue, and his chin almost dropped on his waistcoat.

“ I fear,” said he, “ Mr. Levinge, you have not acted judiciously in drawing out so much money under the present circumstances.”

“ It will be to the satisfaction of the Board,” said Levinge, “ if I state the position in which I am placed with respect to the works at Lemford.”

He then entered into a detailed account of the operations from the beginning ; showed what natural obstacles had to be encountered, how they had been overcome, produced a correct statement of his accounts, and concluded half an hour’s speech in these words :—

“ You will have perceived by this time, gentlemen, the valuable nature of my Lemford property ; my observations are based on more than a year’s experience ; and when I speak of the future, I do not give you my

own opinion, but simply repeat the written reports of the most able mineralogists and mining engineers in Great Britain. The property is not only worth all that has been advanced, but treble, ay, quadruple that amount; but everything depends on keeping on the works until their productiveness is demonstrated. For this purpose the money I received to-day is to be applied; and if any check is placed on my credit now, the Bank will necessarily suffer. On the other hand, if I am not cramped in action, before six months elapse you will have reason to congratulate yourselves on your foresight. I am not only advocating my own interest, but I am equally considering the welfare of the Bank, and our responsibilities as directors."

A quiet little man, who had not yet spoken, now got on his legs.

"Mr. Chairman," said he, "I have a resolution to propose."

"I shall be happy to hear you, sir."

"Then," said the speaker, "I beg to move that for the future no accommodation be extended to any director of this Bank without the same security as is required in the case of any other client, and also that no director who is indebted to the extent of seven thousand pounds shall receive any farther loan, except with the consent of the Board."

This proposition was received in dead silence; at length it found a seconder, and an animated debate ensued. An amendment was proposed to the effect—"That it was invidious and impolitic to hamper the

directors with restrictions in their private capacities as customers of the Bank." It was put to the meeting and lost, when the original motion was carried by a majority of two, after which the board separated.

Week after week rolled away, and still Levinge remained in Town, occasionally running down to Brighton for a day; but whenever he stumbled on any of his old friends, they treated him with such marked indifference that at last he was obliged to cut them, and very soon found himself occupying an unpleasantly isolated position.

For the amusements of the gambling house he had no taste, neither had he a vocation for drunkenness.

Peace within, and calm around, had long since vanished from his experience, even if he had ever truly known their meaning. When, alone, especially at night, the memory of the scene at Haughton Hall came back in all its terror; but after a time his natural courage got the better of his fears and fancies. His conscience was not healed, but seared.

One morning (he had taken apartments at the Clarendon) Mr. Jones was announced:—

"I thought it advisable to run up to Town to see you, sir. As I told you, the strata have proved so broken that we have temporarily lost the coal. From a survey since made, however, I have no doubt we shall get at it shortly if the water does not stop us; whether there is any internal reservoir in the hill to which we are approaching I know not, but the present pump will not keep the workings free, and the foul air is also very

abundant. Indeed I am sorry to say that an explosion which occurred the night before last has cost us three of our best hands, and unless some unusual precaution is taken, we may reckon on a catastrophe as inevitable. The Government inspector will be down next week, when he certainly will interfere."

"That must not be," said Levinge. "What is best to be done?"

"We must carry up a stack above the surface, at the farthest end of the workings; and over the side of the hill nearest the top of the incline, we shall be obliged to put up an aerometer."

"Is this outlay indispensable?"

"I am quite sure it is," replied Jones.

"Then set about it at once."

This resolve necessitated another visit to Mr. Smith, but that gentleman could neither be cajoled nor frightened into lending another sixpence. "To be plain with you," said the manager, "the Bank is not in a position to help you. There has been a regular run on us this week, and if it continues another three days we must succumb."

This was pleasing and not altogether unexpected intelligence. Levinge listened quietly, and congratulated himself that he had his twenty thousand pounds untouched. So he determined to send Jones down to put his plans into execution, and ere night he cashed his notes, and brought the gold home in a cab.

Before the mail left he performed one act of grace at the expense of a breach of trust. He wrote on a half-sheet of note-paper—

"Sell out your bank shares immediately."

Enclosing the missive in an envelope, he addressed it—

"FRANK HOWARD, Esq.,

"Castle Croft,

"Clayshire."

The recipient attempted to carry out the views of his anonymous correspondent, but Mr. Howard's broker failed to find a purchaser on any terms, although he offered the shares at fifty per cent. less than they cost a few months previously.

This was the last feather that broke the camel's back. It was noised about the Stock Exchange, and in every coffee-house and office in the city, that the Cosmopolitan had a complaint in the chest. The friends of that grand institution, in pious zeal, adopted the old system of phlebotomy with the usual success; the patient had not sufficient strength to endure the treatment. In ten days from Levinge's last interview with Smith the Bank closed its doors, thereby surprising no one except the depositors, who soon learned that the glorious dividends they had received were paid out of the capital.

With the fall of the bank the Lemford Works also stopped. The Bricklintonians were in one week supplied with six months' store of gossip: Monday morning brought the news that Mr. Howard's personal property was entirely lost in the failure of the Cosmopolitan Bank; Wednesday evening informed the peaceful citi-

zens that the operations at Lemford were at an end, and that their Member was a bankrupt.

Whether an honest, energetic man by strict economy might not, placed as Levinge was, have retrieved his position, is quite a question. Had he put down his yacht, sold his stud, cut down nine-tenths of his expenditure, he perchance might have weathered the storm. But such a life had no charms for him, so while his freedom of action was yet unimpaired, he very discreetly determined to travel, and accordingly he placed the English Channel between him and his creditors.

As the reader will possibly lose sight of this amiable individual for some time, it is well that his anxiety as to his welfare should be set at rest.

Possessed of an abundance of ready cash, he had the world to choose as his residence, therefore he determined to complete his European travels. From some little inattention to some particularly rusty lawyers, he was proclaimed an outlaw. He had not the opportunity of accepting the Chiltern Hundreds, as his fellow-members adopted the harsh method of expelling him, and another took his office, namely, his old opponent, Mr. Leigh, who walked over the course. All the unentailed property was sold; the Hall, however, could not be disposed of; and as old Mrs. Levinge had an annuity of eight hundred a-year settled on the estate, she, with one or two old servants, continued to occupy the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

Scene—a Draper's Shop in Main Street, Bricklinton.

Time, noon. Enter Miss McCatty.

"HAVE you any twilled sheets for servants?"

SHOPMAN (Bowing obsequiously).—"Yes, ma'am. Alfred, bring here the twilled sheetings. Excellent quality, miss; cheap, warm, strong, everlasting wear. How many pair may I send you?"

MISS MC. (Hypercritically).—"It's the poorest thing at the price I ever saw; but you shopkeepers have no conscience."

(SHOPMAN grows red about the gills, but has a large family and cannot afford to be independent, so he smiles blandly, and treats the observation as a joke.)

MISS MC.—"Have you any more of the same kind?"

SHOPMAN.—"Alfred, bring me number two—double T—S." (Another roll was brought and spread out; another, and another.)

MISS MC.—"They all seem equally thin, you could blow them to pieces. But it is just like you, everything is made to sell—all for show."

SHOPMAN.—“ We have other sheetings, miss, of a superior quality.”

MISS MC.—“ Let me see them.”

SHOPMAN.—“ Alfred, bring here S—S, and Extra S, and also Super. S, and Extra Super. Linen S.” By this time the counter was laden with rolls of every description of sheeting piled up like fascines, behind which the shopman protected himself from his customer’s ferret eyes. The good articles were too dear, and the cheap ones too poor. Miss McCatty had occupied an hour of the man’s time, and had purchased nothing, when Mrs. Davis, of Waterpark, entered the shop.

“ Mrs. Davis,” said Miss McCatty to herself, and it instantly crossed her mind that she had not received an invitation to Waterpark for at least six months, “ I must have done something to offend her, so I will ask her to tea, and that will put it all straight.” The former lady had scarcely got within the door when she heard the shrill voice of her friend. “ My dear Mrs. Davis, I am so glad to see you ; where did you spring from ?”

“ I came to my sister’s yesterday,” said Mrs. Davis.

“ Going to make a long stay ?”

“ No ; I return to Waterpark to-morrow.”

“ Well, now, are you disposed to be very kind ?”

“ I hope so.”

“ Then perform an act of charity, and take tea with me this evening, and ask your sister to come also.”

“ I shall have much pleasure.”

“ Mind, bring your work with you.”

The two ladies together approached the counter; Miss McCatty being a little curious to know what her friend wished to purchase.

SHOPMAN (*loquitur*).—"Will any of these sheetings suit you, miss?"

"No, none to-day."

Inwardly cursing the "old maid," as he savagely stigmatized her, he ordered Alfred to roll up and replace the mountain of goods, and proceeded to go through a similar service with silks and ribbons; but this time with better fortune, as Mrs. Davis purchased one of his most expensive dresses.

Leaving her friend to select some ribbon, Miss McCatty proceeded to the house of Miss Bronchitis to ask her to join the party. Miss B. gladly accepted the invitation, and returning home, the intending hostess penned one of her sweetest epistles to the Reverend F. Martin, the new curate, hoping that it would not be too great a sacrifice of his valuable time to spend an evening in her service. For a moment she thought of extending her invitation to Mr. Henly, but she re-considered the suggestion; and although the proportion of one clergyman to four ladies was small, yet she thought the former might suffice for the occasion. Her guests decided on, the next consideration was to provide for their entertainment.

It being Thursday evening, and as Miss McCatty only allowed herself one-half pound of butter weekly, purchased at the Saturday's market, her store was getting short, particularly as her servant had no stock on

which an inroad could be made (she received an allowance of ten shillings a-year in consideration of relinquishing this luxury), therefore it was necessary to purchase half-a-pound at the chandler's, where it always imbibed a wholesome flavour of penny dips. Three penny tea-cakes were bought, which were to be split, toasted, and buttered, and would then form an imposing dish. An investment was made in a twopenny roll, to be introduced in the inviting form of thin bread and butter, rolled up by the delicately dirty hands of the maid-of-all-work.

"I don't think any of the ladies care for cake," said Miss McCatty, and she thought for an instant that that expense might be saved; but as it would come in usefully for supper, the outlay of two-and-sixpence was resolved upon. Some scoloped oysters and a dish of macaroni would, with a bottle of ginger wine, complete the entertainment. Tea-cake, threepence; butter, sixpence halfpenny; roll, twopence; cake, two-and-six; oysters, one shilling; macaroni, fourpence. Thus did the good lady calculate the cost, and inwardly growling at the horrible expense of entertaining company, she counted out four and ninepence halfpenny, and despatched Jane with a basket for the goods, comforting herself with the reflection that she would dine off a poached egg, and thus save cooking any meat.

The best tea-things were arranged, the silver tea-pot was disinterred from the bottom of a huge box, where it generally reposed in a green baize shroud, and every arrangement was completed by five o'clock. There

was another hour to be filled up, and as Jane at this time luckily smashed a twopenny basin, her mistress found congenial employment for her unoccupied moments in descanting on the sin of carelessness in a very loud key, which an ill-natured person might have deemed excited.

As a storm generally precedes a calm, and the ocean is never so placid and smiling as after a tempest, so Miss McCatty sat on the sofa in her drawing-room as the clock struck seven, a very picture of sweetness and amiability. Miss Bronchitis made her appearance first, and presently Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Ethelfield passed the window. Their hostess met them on the landing, and herself conducted her dear friends to the bed-room, so exuberant was her joy.

"Mr. Martin is late," said Miss McCatty; "I fear he is detained somewhere; at any rate, we won't wait;" and Jane was ordered to bring up tea. Carefully watching which of her friends ate least, tea-cake or bread and butter, she regulated her taste accordingly. Before the repast was concluded, Mr. Martin made his appearance, and the party was complete. Each of the ladies had brought her work with her, and as Mrs. Davis made a winder of the parson's wrists, the hands of all were occupied, and their tongues at liberty for mutual improvement, or any more agreeable occupation.

Many events had occurred in the neighbourhood, so there was no lack of congenial themes. Should any person wish the latest information of his neighbour's affairs in the shortest time and most comprehensive

manner, let him join such a party as were now assembled under Miss McCatty's roof, four ladies and an idle parson.

"Pride will have its fall," remarked Mrs. Davis feelingly, adding in an exuberant tone, "but I am very sorry for the Howards."

"Has Mr. Howard lost much?" said Miss Bronchitis, looking significantly at Mrs. Ethelfield, whose husband was the unfortunate gentleman's solicitor.

The lawyer's wife looked very grave and shook her head mysteriously.

"He has lost thirty thousand pounds," said the Reverend F. Martin, "every farthing of the money. I cannot understand what could have induced him to take shares in that bank; but I suppose he believed in the infallibility of that double-distilled rascal, Levinge."

"You didn't use to speak so of your friend," observed Miss McCatty.

"The sinner! he hasn't paid his election bills, and he has sold the next presentation to Ulverstone, which I was to have had."

"Too bad!" ejaculated Miss Bronchitis, who had an eye on the church. "Do you suppose Mr. Howard is much embarrassed?"

"No," said the parson, "I believe he is not. Miss Howard will be the greatest sufferer, for that old cousin of her father's, William Mott, who has been married ten years, was presented by his wife with a son the day before yesterday, so all the landed property will go to

the child ; and unless he insures his life, his daughter will be penniless."

"Poor girl!" said Mrs. Davis, "it is rather hard for her too—an heiress one morning, and a portionless lassie the next. But she did give herself such airs ; she used to sweep by me in the ball-room as if I were a cook, just giving me a graciously condescending nod. If what I hear is true, Mr. Martin has understated the amount of their loss ; I am told it will not be known for some time, as the shareholders will have to pay heavy calls. In that case he must give up the hounds, and there won't be many to cry at the change, since he ruins the sport by the way he treats the dogs ;—at least, so Charley tells me, and he ought to know."

"Yes," said the parson, "he is ever lifting them, and he very rarely makes a lucky cast."

The conversation was rapidly becoming too deep for the ladies. Mrs. Ethelfield, though, soon restored it to its proper level, by asking if any one had seen Mrs. Aylmer lately ?

Nobody had.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Martin, "she was in church last Sunday. But she is looking very ill."

"I hear she has ruptured a blood-vessel," said Miss Bronchitis.

"Dear me!" echoed the three other ladies in chorus.

"I should be sorry if anything were to happen to her," remarked the hostess ; "but the way in which she has been going on with that young Evelyn is perfectly disgraceful, and she a married woman too ! What she

can see in the young man, I can't understand. But there she was before his father's death, hunting up the sister, as if she cared for the society of the little girl. I suppose such persons think that no one but themselves is gifted with eyesight."

"I tell you what it is, ladies," said the parson, "young Evelyn is a lucky dog, and many would like to step into his shoes."

"Oh, fie, Mr. Martin," said the pure Miss Bronchitis, "I am shocked at you—absolutely shocked."

"I must confess," said Mrs. Davis, "that Mrs. Aylmer's conduct is extraordinary. If she were not a connexion of my husband's, I should have cut her long ago. In my opinion, she has thrown down the gauntlet to the whole county. But she is a very strange person, and was the rage in India."

"That renders it the more remarkable," said Mrs. Ethelfield, "that she should take up with this young man."

It must be observed here, that this lady's husband had not the making of Mr. Evelyn's will, and therefore she had ceased to entertain a favourable opinion of the son of Mr. Ethelfield's former client.

"But there is nothing absolutely wrong, do you suppose, Miss McCatty?" observed Mrs. Davis.

"Don't ask me, my dear. I hope nothing would induce me to take away a woman's reputation," and she shook her head significantly. "It's a pity her husband doesn't send for her back to India."

"Dear me," said the parson, "she wouldn't go

unless it suited her ; either her health would be too precarious, or her dread of travelling alone so far would prevent her from undertaking the journey. Depend upon it, if a woman wants to get back to her lord, she won't wait for an invitation."

"I've heard," said the hostess in a mysterious manner, "that she meets young Evelyn at night, waylays him by the river bank, and compels him to walk with her."

"Nonsense," replied the reverend gentleman ; "with all due deference, I cannot believe that Mrs. Aylmer really cares a straw about Evelyn, and I am sure he is not so much of a saint as to require compulsion to walk (present company excepted)," the parson bowing all round, "with the handsomest woman in the county."

"All that I can say on the subject," observed the chaste Miss B., "is, that some persons may steal a horse, while others dare not look over the hedge, and for my part I wouldn't for the world treat public opinion so contemptuously as she does."

"I've always understood," remarked the hostess—"indeed, my dear brother, who was in the civil service, has told me—that Indian society is the fastest in the world ; not that he knew it from experience, poor dear fellow, because he was pure as an angel."

"My uncle knew him," said the parson ; "a jolly good fellow he was, with such a capacity for beer ; he had a goblet made purposely for himself, double the usual size—it held rather more than a quart, which he used to empty at a gulp. My uncle knew him very well ;"—

and then, in a whisper to Mrs. Davis—"Such a family of half-castes as the old fellow had!"

"What did you say?" said the sister of the dear departed.

"I was observing to Mrs. Davis," remarked the reverend gentleman, "what a pity it was he left no son who might have inherited his fine qualities."

"Ah yes, very true," replied the lady—"he had such white skin—but then it runs in our family;" and the fair speaker entertained her auditors with a description of her brother's charms; a theme which interested none but herself, so it soon dropped. Various minor characters were now introduced on the stage instead; servants and their delinquencies were freely canvassed, the prices of shop goods were quoted and commented on, and then some one asked "if it was true that old Mr. Evelyn had died worth forty thousand pounds, which he had tied up so that his children could not touch it for five years?"

On this subject there was much difference of opinion. It was a mystery which nobody could solve; therefore it had a peculiar fascination for the gossips of the town.

It was patent to everyone that Eveleyn lived very quietly, and that he was very attentive to business; but whether this change was from choice or necessity was a moot point. Every one believed that his father had died a wealthy man, and the story that he had made a peculiar disposition of his property accounted for the assiduity of his son.

"I must confess," said Mrs. Davis, "that I respect the young man more, now that he is able to appreciate his true position. I often wonder why persons of his class ever attempt to scale the barriers of society; they only can succeed at the expense of their independence, while those who admit them despise, and take every opportunity of mortifying them. And very right too; of what use would it be to trace your descent from the Celts or Saxons, if your birth did not confer on you special privileges? If it were not so, you might as well be born the son of a Jew pedlar, if money and impudence could give a man the advantages of nineteen quarterings."

"I think," said Miss McCatty, "that young Evelyn has been taught a lesson; he won't give himself any airs for the future. His mill will grind all the nonsense out of him."

"Don't be so hard on the young man," said Mr. Martin; "we can afford to be generous, since we gave him and his party such a thrashing at the election. Indeed I am sorry to hear that his landlord won't renew his lease for him. It's all very well to put on the screw for political ends, but the pressure should be removed as soon as possible afterwards."

"Won't Salmon really renew his lease?" said Mrs. Ethelfield.

"I dare say you have heard your husband say so," rejoined the parson sharply. "It is always the case with those crack-brained men; you never can rely on them except for mischief, and then you may calculate

with certainty what their conduct will be. Do you know that he has built up all the windows to save taxes except one for each apartment, so that the sitting rooms are in darkness?"

"Dear me!" all four ladies exclaimed in chorus.

"I have understood," said Miss B. inadvertently, forgetting for the moment Mr. Martin was present, "that Mrs. Salmon is"—then stopping short as she caught the parson's eye—"O dear!" she cried, and put down her head and blushed.

"Has that anything to do with the window tax?" observed the reverend gentleman; but no one replied.

The tray was now brought in, and the oysters and maccaroni sent forth the most appetizing odours. The ladies partook freely of the good things, and did not shun the double stout. Hot water and tumblers were also introduced, and, tell it not in Gath, all the party except Miss Bronchitis partook of some spirit, medicinally, of course. There was ginger wine on the table, but it was not patronized.

Again all their neighbours appeared before them, mentally at least. The levity of Mrs. Aylmer—the misfortune of the Howards—the mad freaks of Salmon—and the cool assurance of Eveleyn, were rediscussed until half past eleven o'clock, when the visitors rose to leave, with a clear conscience of having done their duty to the full, in judging the sins of their neighbours, and damaging as many reputations as possible.

"Thank goodness," said Miss McCatty as the front door closed, "that's over."

“I thought it best to accept her invitation,” said Mrs. Davis to her sister-in-law, “as she might have been offended had I declined ; and I feel as if I had suffered the pains of martyrdom, and have reaped none of the glory.”

CHAPTER IX.

ALL IS NOT DARK.

How Mr. Howard cursed his nephew, the destroyer of his peace, his honour, and his property. Loud also were his self-reproaches. "Fool that I was to trust him ! Where were my eyes that I couldn't see through his villainy ?"

Whenever he broke out in this way in the presence of his daughter, she, as usual, performed the part of ministering angel.

"Don't say a word in his favour, Kate ; two years ago you were an heiress, and now you have nothing."

"Don't fret, dearest, I dare say I shall do very well."

"It is invariably true that misfortune always come double, and, after ten years of married life without a chick, that blessed cousin of mine is presented with a son and heir—heir to my estates. It's terrible—it almost deprives me of reason. And then, to make it worse, nobody can tell me to what extent these calls on the Bank shares will run. I shall be obliged to insure my life, to pay off these incumbrances, and won't they charge me a jolly premium."

"Do not take these troubles to heart ; you may rely on it we shall both be better for them."

"Better for them! Don't talk nonsense, Kate; perhaps I shall be obliged to give up the hounds, and with them all hunting. I couldn't ride at their tail if they passed into the possession of another. Or perhaps they will start a d—d subscription pack, and every blessed snob who gives his ten-pound-note will have an equal voice with myself."

"Oh! don't go on in this strain; you are doubtless exaggerating our difficulties. Besides, these trials will bring us nearer together, if possible—at least, I shall not leave you now; and a short time ago I was almost another's."

"You are a good girl, Kate, a good girl; perhaps you are right, after all. But this wretched baby being born, and the failure of this cursed bank, have nearly killed me. I'll go and have a look at the puppies."

Kate, left to herself, sat listlessly for a few moments; her heroism was in part assumed, out of consideration for her father, who would have suffered infinitely more had he seen his daughter depressed. But when his back was turned, she frequently had great difficulty in maintaining her composure. Then all the joyous hours of the past would rise before her in memory, and all the bright anticipations in which her imagination used to revel. Hitherto she had only contemplated the possibility of walking in a path which all the advantages of education, riches, and position would contribute to render delightful. Wealth at her command, it caused her no sacrifice to respond to the cry of the poor. She not only enjoyed the desire to do good, but she had the ability to render substantial service to many; for the



future, however, her generosity must not be indiscriminate.

Mr. Howard had not become poor in the literal sense of the word; he possessed, and his daughter would possess after him, a handsome income. Thousands of families are every day educated, and the sons sent forth into the world as gentlemen, and succeed in maintaining that position on a third of his income. But, as riches are comparative, that which is a fortune to one man is barely a competency to another, if he has formerly enjoyed six or eight times as much. Formerly Kate had five hundred a year at her own disposal, now she had one-fifth of that amount. How should she make the best use of it?

Nothing annoyed Mr. Howard more than the idea of retrenchment; it wounded his self-love painfully. Having so long stood at the head of the great county society, a position determined by birth and rent-roll, it seemed to him the *ne plus ultra* of ignominy to descend from that high position. Miserable vanity! But, poor man! he could not rise superior to it.

There is no sensation more gratifying to little minds than to be the envy of others; on the contrary, it is terribly humiliating when they become the objects of heartless commiseration. This the owner of Castle Croft felt; and his daughter, knowing his weakness, was puzzled how to act.

"I must sell my horses," said Kate, "but how, I know not, as papa will be furious. And I must dismiss my poor maid, as I can easily dispense with her services. How to speak to him about this matter I cannot

tell ; and yet it must be accomplished." She debated in her own mind whether she should confer with him before she put her intentions into execution or afterwards. Even if it were possible to sell the horses without her father's knowledge, she disliked the idea of doing so ; therefore she determined to consult him first. When Mr. Howard returned, she put the question to him.

"Certainly not," said he. "Why, everybody will say we are going to the dogs!"

"But what does it matter, if the gossips say that which is untrue?"

"It matters very much, Kate. I don't like it. I wouldn't for the world it should be said that I had sold your horses, and kept my own."

"But, papa, your health depends on horse-exercise, and I am becoming more indifferent to riding every day. Under any circumstances, I have given up hunting ; and neither you nor myself ever care to ride along the roads."

"Very true, Kate."

"Then why not let me do as I wish?"

"I think that you are acting under a momentary impulse, and you will regret it hereafter."

"No, no ! I know perfectly well what I am desirous to do. Come, dear, let me have my own way ; I have always been a spoiled child."

Partly by coaxing, partly by persuasion, she carried her point, and finally determined to ask Jack (now Mr.) Hilton to assist her in the execution of her project ; she

accordingly wrote to him by that post, requesting that he would do her the favour to call at Castle Croft on the first day he could spare.

She was sealing her note when the servant entered, saying, "A poor woman particularly wishes to see Miss Howard."

"I will attend to her in a few moments."

Kate did not keep the stranger waiting long. Entering the hall, she found a respectable-looking woman of the working-class; clean, but coarsely dressed, her garments bearing many evidences of the use of the needle, and of her skill as a mender of old clothes.

Dropping a low curtsey as Kate advanced, she addressed the young lady in a frank, straightforward manner that at once prepossessed her auditor.

"Please, miss," she said, "I've heard as how you are very good to the poor, and my poor neighbour, Sally John, is took very bad, and she has only a shilling a week from the parish, and now she can do nothing for herself, and she is almost starving."

"Where does Sally John live?"

"In Green End, miss."

"Green End? That is seven miles from here. Have you no one nearer to apply to?"

"Well, miss, I've been to Squire Jones, and to Mrs. Corbett, and to one or two others; and, indeed, they all give something, but they are tired of giving; so I thought as how I would try to get her some help from somewhere else."

"Who is Sally John?"

"She's a poor widow woman, miss, and when she's well, she sells a few nuts and oranges, and such like, and earns a few pence; and because she tries to help herself, and keep a tidy appearance, the parish only allows her, as I told you, Miss, a shilling a week, and that only just pays for her rent and firing; and now the poor thing has been bad three weeks, and the parish doctor has only seen her once, and then he ordered port wine and strenthnin' things; and lor, Miss! where's a poor body to have the like?"

Kate looked at her watch; it was half-past three o'clock. "It's too late," said she to herself, "I cannot go to-day—what does the poor woman suffer from?"

"Why, miss, honey, it's in her head, and her stomach, and she's weak all over, and her heart seems dancing mad inside of her, and she can't sleep by night or day, and she can swallow nothing but a drop of tea."

"Has she no relations to look after her?"

"No, miss. She has a son, and he's a sergeant in the Snuffers and Miners, out in Chini, and he gets good pay, and writes home to his mother piis letters, and never sends her not so much as a sixpence."

"How sad! how very sad! Have you a basket with you?"

"Yes, miss, and a bottle." The latter was a vial, in which the poor thing expected to receive the precious wine.

"Just wait here a moment," said Kate, "while I give the servant orders."

A dish of jelly and a bottle of port wine were soon packed up ; Kate added half-a-crown, and promised to pay the invalid a visit.

This act of charity performed, she retired to her private room, and taking pen and paper, commenced a series of calculations, the object of which was to ascertain how much could be accomplished with a hundred a year, a sum that she had hitherto spent on her toilet alone. After a sheet or two had been covered with figures, she at last arrived at the result that twenty pounds would suffice for her personal expenditure, that ten pounds would cover her subscriptions, therefore seventy would remain to devote to charitable purposes.

It cost her little pain to part with her horses. Since her illness in London she had given up hunting. The late painful scene through which she had passed rendered her averse to society, and to the pleasure she used formerly to enjoy in joining equestrian parties, when, with half-a-dozen others, she used to enter the forest and scamper along the woodland glades for hours together. But to part with her maid was a sore trial ; she had been in her service ever since her mother's death, and had always been treated with the utmost kindness and consideration. Fortunately, at this time a friend of Kate's in Yorkshire wanted a servant in Bradley's capacity, for whom she obtained the situation.

When she was retiring to rest, her maid was, as usual, in attendance. "Bradley," said Kate, "I

have a painful piece of intelligence to announce to you."

"What is it, miss?" said the good creature, starting.

"You have heard, perhaps, that my father has lately lost a good deal of money?"

"Yes, miss."

"I know," continued Kate, "that I can confide in you, and therefore I tell you candidly that his loss has been a severe one, and will necessitate some changes in this establishment."

"I shall be very happy, miss," said the girl, interrupting her mistress, "to take lower wages. You have always been a kind friend to me, miss, and anything that I could do I would do cheerfully."

"I know you would, Bradley, but unfortunately I cannot accept this sacrifice at your hands; and it pains me very much to tell you that you must choose another mistress."

The poor girl burst into tears; she had never contemplated such a change, and she begged, entreated, and implored to be allowed to remain. She could stay for any wages—without wages—if Miss Howard would please to keep her.

Kate's resolution almost broke down—for a moment she wavered. Bradley saw her hesitation, and became more earnest than ever. By an effort of her will she nerved herself to the task, and replied in that calm, quiet tone which goes to the heart, "Bradley, if you really love me you will fulfil my wishes. I have written to my friend Lady Bagshot, and here is her reply. It

is to the effect that she will take you as her own maid on the terms I mentioned to her—the same wages that you have now.”

A long debate ensued ; Bradley was most reluctant to leave, but her mistress prevailed.

Immediately after breakfast next morning Kate ordered her pony carriage and drove to Green End. Arrived in the village, she asked for Sally Jones' cottage, and had no difficulty in finding the humble dwelling. It consisted of two rooms, one only of which the poor widow occupied.

The door stood open, she threw the reins to the boy and descended. Though the building was in wretched repair, there was, nevertheless, an air of neatness about it which first manifested itself in the clean door step. Entering the apartment she saw there three or four women, and from their low voices the sufferer was apparently very ill. Their faces were turned in the direction of the low pallet, so they did not perceive her presence. One said to the other, “Poor thing, she looks very thin.” Another voice remarked, “Poor Sally ! she was always fond of a pair of white stockings, and she's got clean ones on now for the last time.”

What did it all mean ? The neighbours were laying out the corpse. The last rites had just been completed by the hands of her humble friends, who, true to the end, had remembered even in death the harmless vanity of the old woman.

Kate turned pale, and felt so faint that she could

scarcely get out into the open air. The women followed her curtsying.

"It's very good of you to come, miss," said her visitor of the previous evening. "The last drop of anything poor Sally took was a spoonful of your wine this morning, miss, and she blessed you afore she died."

Kate summoned up courage, and asked to see the remains. It was the most gratifying proposal that she could have made to her auditors, who conducted her into the room, removed the face-cloth, and disclosed the yellow features of the deceased, the nose standing out in high relief from the sunken cheeks and shrivelled lips. Kate was no physician, but something told her that care and nourishment would have prolonged life had they been administered in time. The face was that of a skeleton, where the long-drawn lines told of many a month and year of suffering. Then before her mind's eye rose up the vision of the weary days through which the poor creature had passed to the valley of rest.

Everything in the room was beautifully neat and clean ; the few square inches of glass were clear and bright ; the two brass candlesticks, sole ornaments of the chimney-piece, shone resplendently, and every article of furniture bespoke the carefulness of their late owner. The women saw that Kate remarked the unusual order of the little room, and one of them said, "Ah, poor Sally was allus a tidy body, and one or t'other of us lent her a helpin hand when she was too weak to do't herself."

Kate distributed a few shillings among her new friends, and entering her carriage, drove slowly home. She had seen enough of the woes of poverty for one day. "Let her gather strength for the morrow!"

Of a kind-hearted and generous disposition, she had ever been accustomed to take a lively interest in the working classes (as we have seen on a former occasion); she paid many a visit to the cottages in her neighbourhood, now bringing some generous gift, or offering a word of counsel, or a message of comfort; but hitherto her ministering offices formed no regular part of her duties—they had been undertaken in obedience to some impulse, at uncertain intervals; now, however, she thought it had become her duty to take a more active part in promoting the welfare of those around her. "I will try to render my life useful," was her humble resolve.

Day after day and week after week passed on, and no day departed without the recording angel noting some good deed; the golden letters covered his page, and their glory shone like sunbeams along the line. The simple wayfarer passes through the fields or beside the hedges with a dim sense of beauty floating across his mind, but the botanist following in his footsteps sees wonders in every leaf, and the records of creative law written even in the petals of the weed flower.

The rich, the thoughtless, the prosperous, and the gay, as they drive on the high-road of life, see children rolling in the mud, and put their handkerchiefs to their noses when they pass a cottage door. They know that

there are poor people in the world, it is part of the order of nature ; but they flatter themselves that they are happy, notwithstanding their poverty. Doubtless there are seasons when they suffer hardships ; have we not all our share of suffering to undergo ? The country has passed a poor-law, the parishes have built union houses, no one need starve ; the rates are high enough to feed the paupers on roast beef and plum pudding daily. Let us respect the privacy of the labouring classes ; they do not inspect our houses, why should we peer into their cottages ?

Some eighteen centuries ago a meek and lowly man trod the rough path of those whose bread is earned by the sweat of the brow. There was poverty and sickness then, hunger and want in those days as now. He turned not from the abode of the humble, neither was he deaf to the cry of the needy. The wounds of the body and the diseases of the soul he healed alike, and one doctrine he taught, " Follow me ! "

In the field of her self-assumed labours Kate made many discoveries, and learned many facts she had never suspected. The district was devoted to agriculture, but the pictures of rustic life she might have painted would not have fascinated urban lovers of the country.

She found more wretchedness and privation within the area of a few miles than she had hitherto imagined could have existed in all Clayshire.

The passers-by saw little of it, for the poor are not devoid of pride, and many a man makes a decent appearance, to whom hard skim-milk cheese is a luxury.

Principally among the old and decrepit recipients of out-door parish relief Kate found the greatest amount of wretchedness ; old married people eking out a few sad years, at the end of more than half a century of toil, on a weekly allowance of three shillings and sixpence. But when sickness and disease had made their entrance, their distress was seen portrayed in all its gloom.

When in the evening she sat down to think over the day's work, her heart used to sink within her at the prospect of want and care, sickness and woe, her daily walks or drives disclosed to her, contrasted with her inability to afford effectual aid. Eight shillings a week were the regular wages, which had to provide food, clothing, rent and firing, for frequently as many individuals. How the feat was accomplished was a mystery, especially when the labourer's family were young, and the mother engaged in nursing. Yet it was done ; and the man went forth in the morning, and came home at evening, day after day, week after week. A day of incessant toil, a night broken in upon by the querulous cries of infants. Going out in the darkness in winter, coming home in the gloom of night, Sixty-three hours of toil, paid for at three halfpence an hour. Children a mass of dirt ; a wife, wrinkled, uncombed and unwashed ; for a home, an overgrown sty, and the food prepared amid filth. O Arcadian delights ! O wearisome naked truth !

Then when sickness strikes down the father or mother, and the daily wage is no longer earned, and credit is stop-

ped at the shop—and the little ones cry for bread—and the fever spreads to other members of the family—and the tender mercies of the poor-law guardians are the only help—and the parish doctor is the only medical attendant; then, and not till then, is the bitter anguish of poverty thoroughly understood.

Many a scene of this kind Kate Howard witnessed, and whenever her presence came, hope gladdened the cottagers' hearts; for nought that kindness and a gentle soul could do was ever left undone.

The neighbourhood was generally healthy, notwithstanding in the aggregate very many cases of great distress came under her notice. Had she not sought them out, they would never have become known to her. The patients would have recovered, and the season of trial would have been passed over in silence—or the church bell would have tolled gently some evening, and the pauper's funeral would have passed on unnoticed. But as soon as Kate knew the lives of the poor, as they were written every day, she wondered at the stoicism of their natures, and marvelled at the icy indifference of those who might help them.

Her father used to say, "Of all your fancies, Kate, the most objectionable one is your present passion for intruding into the affairs of the labouring people. For ——— sake, let well alone; they have got on without your assistance hitherto, and will do so to the end of the chapter. By and bye you will persuade them that they really have some grievance, and then there will be no end of a row. We shall have Fergus O'Connor

and his five points, and every species of agrarian outrage will follow. Hang it ! the men are all poachers, their wives are all thieves, and their children tear all the hedges in the parish to pieces."

"My dear papa, if you would only accompany me in one expedition, I think I should convince you that there is a great work to be done, in improving the condition of the labouring classes ; and I wish you would come with me some day, and I am sure I should enlist your sympathies."

"Tut ! tut ! Kate—Don't talk nonsense."

"Indeed, papa, it is no nonsense, and sooner or later I shall want your assistance too."

"Then you won't get it, my dear ! I am now only a tenant for life, and I cannot afford to spend more money than I can avoid."

One morning, as Kate was walking down the avenue, she met the same good woman, Mary James, who had been an ambassadress from Sally John.

"Good morning, Mary !"

"Good morning, miss ! I hope I see you well."

"Quite well, thank you."

"I've taken the liberty to trouble you again, Miss Howard. I axe your pardon, but if you can't help me nobody can."

"What is the matter, Mary ?"

"Why, miss, my sister's son, Thomas Pawlet, has got into trouble with Squire Salmon."

"What has he done ?"

"He's a mason, miss, and he was coming home from

work last Monday evening, and took the short cut through the oak-field plantation. No sooner had he got over the stile into the wood than a something dashed across his path, and he let fly his stick in a minute; 'twas in the evening, just betwixt the two lights, and sure enough he knocked the hare upside down. Well, he ran up to see what it was, and Mr. Salmon himself jumped out upon him, and sore (swore) as he'd have his life. And now poor Tom is to 'pear 'fore the justices next Saturday."

"I am afraid your nephew has done wrong, Mary."

"Yes, miss, I knows he has, and he knows it too—and he's very sorry, miss—and he can't think as how he came to do it. 'Twas all in a fluster like, and he threw the stick, and 'fore he knew where he was he had the hare in his hand, and the Squire was down on him."

"It's a very sad case, Mary, indeed, but what can I do?"

"I was thinking, miss, as perhaps you might send a note to Mr. Salmon, and persuade him not to be hard on Tom this time, and he'll promise never to offend again. His wife has a babby ten weeks old, and the other child can't walk yet, and if he goes to jail, Miss Howard, honey, I don't know what'll become of 'em."

"I will do what I can for you, Mary, and that without delay."

"God bless you, miss," and the poor soul went her way, her heart overflowing with gratitude, and blessings thick as dew upon her lips.

Kate instantly returned to the house, and wrote to

Salmon. Knowing the peculiarities of the man, she determined not to call, because the chances were that she would not find him at home.

Castle Croft,
Wednesday, October —th.

“DEAR SIR,

“I have a favour to ask of you. Will you, in the goodness of your heart, overlook Thomas Paulett’s offence? I know, from reliable authority, that his breach of the game laws was unpremeditated. He has a wife and family dependent on his labour. I fervently trust you will not proceed against him, because to punish him will be to injure his innocent wife and children.

“Faithfully yours,

“— SALMON, ESQ.

C. HOWARD.”

P. S.—“I shall be happy to pay any legal expenses that may have been incurred.”

Salmon received the note and brought it to his wife.
“Read it, Jenny, and tell me what it’s about.”

Mrs. Salmon did as her husband requested.

“Oh,” said he, “that’s the game, isn’t it? I’ll give the answer myself.” He went out, and finding the messenger, “Give my compliments to Mith Howard,” said he, “and say I’ll attend to the contents of her note.”

Kate received the message, and interpreting the reply as an affirmative answer to her request, she did not think it necessary to take any further steps. To her surprise and disgust, she heard on the next Sunday

that her *protégé* had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

The intelligence excited her terribly. She at once drove to Thomas's cottage, and explained how she had acted. "I ought to have known Salmon better, and could I have anticipated that he meant to proceed with the prosecution, I would have paid the fine ten times over rather than your husband should have gone to jail."

Her vexation was so evident, that the poor woman, Thomas's wife, could not help comforting her. "Don't fret, miss, I knows you would have helped poor Tom. We must bear what the Lord sends us."

Few poachers' wives had so little to complain of as Martha Paulett, during her husband's incarceration. Kate's purse supplied the loss of her husband's wages and ten weeks of the term rolled round. Then rumours reached Green End that the small-pox had broken out in the jail, and that two deaths had taken place already. Three days before the time fixed for the termination of Paulett's imprisonment, his wife was told that he was buried.

Bitterly Kate reproached herself that she had placed confidence in Salmon as a gentleman. For some days she could not summon resolution to visit the widow, although she took care to assure her that she need not be under any apprehension for the future.

A widow and three children to be provided for! The parish allowed the family three shillings, and the guardians thought themselves liberal. Kate Howard supplied the remainder.

A great barrier to her farther usefulness now stared her in the face. Money ! In three months she had spent forty-two pounds, her charities had been at the rate of one hundred and sixty-eight pounds per annum, and she had set out with the intention of spending eighty.

What could she do ? Ask Mr. Howard for money ? He had no spare cash ! Rest on her oars ? Depressing thought ! For the first time in her life, she keenly felt the bitterness of being unable to gratify her benevolent feelings. It was in vain to regret the money uselessly spent in former years. It was not her nature to look behind, hope ever lives before.

She sat in her room alone ; she 'pondered the question in her mind, but difficulties seemed to hedge her in on every side. " I am supposed to be accomplished," was her reflection, " but can I become a worker in any branch of art ?"

Those elegant works of taste that Oriana and Arabella bring home from school, which are the admiration of papa and mamma, and of all gallant young men, are doubtless indications of rare genius.

" My dear Miss Arabella," says the enthusiastic Mr. Smythe, earnestly gazing through his eye-glass at that lovely pencil sketch of Irish women digging potatoes, with a brawling brook in the fore-ground, and a snipe bog in the distance, " you should not stop here. The atmosphere is so breezy, the figures are so life-like ; there is so much character in that short dudeen in the old woman's mouth, and her battered hat, that I feel bound

to say this production of your pencil stamps you as a faithful interpreter of nature. Yours is that highest order of mind, the formist, of which Michael Angelo is the first example. Forgive me if I say, be true to yourself."

"And what is your opinion of Oriana's crayon picture?" asks mamma.

"It breathes the spirit of Raphael!"

Papa's eyes twinkle, mamma is all smiles, the young artist simpers, and Mr. Smythe, on leaving, is pronounced to be a very gentlemanly, accomplished man, and an excellent judge of painting.

It has doubtless been your lot, O reader, to form one of an evening party where the host and hostess are too good to allow cards or dancing, and where the guests are too stupid to talk on any other subject than gossip, or the last novel, in which the best points are invariably overlooked or misunderstood. There is a deep hush, Miss Jones has twisted the music-stool to its correct height, has taken off her gloves, has smoothed the page of music, and "*A Che! La Morte*" rings through the room. "Thank you! thank you!" murmur the entranced auditors. "How beautifully she sings!" everybody echoes, "beautifully sings." "What taste; what execution!" echo repeats, "execution." A cynic mutters to a sarcastic old lady, "An execution it should be, how she has murdered it!" Cynic is in a minority. All save himself shout "beautiful."

Let the pictures be hung in a London gallery—who would agree with Mr. Smythe? Let the songstress

appear at Covent Garden, the cynic would no longer stand alone.

“Tried by the test of abstract merit,” thought Kate, “who would buy my pictures, or play any piece of my composition? And yet every artist has had a beginning, why should I not make an effort?”

Her resolution was no sooner taken than she attempted to put it into execution. She had frequently written music of different kinds — waltzes, melodies, and songs. She selected two of the first, carefully recopied them, and resolved to design a title-page for each. The first she named the “Sunbeam;” the illustration represented a sea-shore, bold and craggy; two or three vessels, with sails set, lay motionless on the calm sea, which the first flush of the sunrise tinted with gold. The second was inscribed, “The Raven Waltzes;” on the cover she drew a hollow in an upland moor, at the bottom of which lay a dead ewe and her living lamb; two ravens, which had only just settled on the carcass, were starting up with open beaks and extended wings, as a sheep-dog came galloping down the hill side, with honest fury flashing from his eyes. All this was accomplished in little less than a week, and it was with heightened colour that Kate sealed up the package for the post-bag. She had arranged with a London publisher to bring the music out, he, good, liberal man, taking care to be secured by prepayment from any loss. It would have gratified the authoress could she have heard the observation of an R.A., who, passing the publisher’s window on the

morning that the waltzes made their first appearance, suddenly stopped. "W.," said he to his friend, "look at that raven scene, one would almost fancy that Landseer had taken to illustrate music. What animation! Positively the birds appear as if they would rise into the air." Something more might have followed to the advantage of the fair painter if the Earl of — had not passed at the moment; and as few artists could resist the opportunity of being seen walking down Regent Street in the company of a live peer, the critics joined their noble friend, in whose *novel* observations all recollection of Kate's production was soon forgotten.

Six months elapsed before Kate knew the result of her first attempt, when she received a cheque from — and Co., covering her outlay, and twenty-five shillings and sixpence profit. Rather mortifying, yet not altogether discouraging. Meanwhile she had not been idle; a reverie, a fantasia, and another set of waltzes were ready, all of which were in due time offered to the public, who proved niggardly patrons, as the authoress knew, when she ultimately ascertained that she had lost five pounds by the transaction. "Surely," said she, "my gift does not lie in this direction." Still she made another trial, but was obliged to confess to herself that her originality was already exhausted, or, at any rate, her compositions were only reproductions of one or two ideas, which would not bear to be diluted through a hundred pages of music.

This discovery gave her no little pain. Could she

have succeeded as a composer, both the occupation and the end would have pleased her. It was not her vocation—another effort must be made.

Should she paint, write a novel, or try sculpture? These were questions for consideration, which her late experience sufficed to answer. The efforts of an amateur can never compete with the skill of a professional. "Whichever path I take, it must be a life-path; and even if I rise from crawling to walking, I do not possess that innate impulse which is the assurance of ultimate victory; moreover, my object is not fame, but money. I must adopt humbler means."

Kate's French governess had been educated in a convent, where she had learned the art of making feather flowers, also flowers of shells, and this accomplishment she had imparted to her pupil. She now resolved to resume the latter branch of her long-abandoned art; and having still in her possession a quantity of the little pearl white shells employed in the construction of the flowers, it was an easy task to procure silver wire of which the branches and sprays were composed.

At first it seemed as if her former skill had deserted her, but a little practice served to show that her taste was unimpaired, and her manipulation as perfect as ever, when brooches, bouquets, and wreaths for the hair in every variety of form testified to the ability and industry of the artist. In the evening, when her father dozed over the "Times," which she usually read to him, late at night, when the household had retired,

and during every spare hour by day, her active fingers were employed.

In thus narrating her efforts to carry out her views, we have hurried over months of time, months that had their full share of other labour, when the sick were visited, the poor relieved, and many grateful hearts comforted with the messages of everlasting love—months, though, in which painful thought was not unknown—when the stern monitor that ruled her heart bade her listen to prudence and justice, which often raised their voices in opposition to benevolence. Deeply it pained her to see distress which she could not alleviate, or only remove in part; to discover wickedness which she had never suspected; and, must it be said? to experience ingratitude where she had only bestowed kindness.

Her eyes became familiar with scenes which many sensitive young ladies would turn from; her ears often heard language that made her shudder, and she gained a knowledge of social life among the lower order which prudery dare not contemplate, and which unassailed virtue regards without commiseration. Often at night she lay awake thinking over the scenes of the day, devising schemes for the amelioration of the evils she constantly witnessed, and sometimes the grey light of dawn, peeping in through her window, saw her eyes still open.

Having set her hand to the plough, she was not one to look back. It was a rough furrow that she essayed to turn, but by God's grace she looked forward to the

ultimate cultivation of the soil, and a rich harvest of souls. Already she experienced a blessing ; her labours gave her so much occupation, that she had no time to think of her own disappointments.

Mr. Howard made no attempt to interfere with his daughter—" If I let her alone she'll come to after a bit," was his sage reflection elegantly expressed ; but instead of her ardour diminishing, it gained strength with time. " It's too much of a good thing, this endless sister of mercy work. It's time Kate should return to society." It did not prove so easy a task as he supposed to win his daughter back to the world.

Kate protested that she was very happy ; happier than she had ever been before. Society had no attractions for her ; she would always be happy to see her father's guests at Castle Croft, but she would not go out in return. If he loved her, he would not press the point.

" Her wounds are still green," thought the Squire—" I am too precipitate ;" and, save some gentlemen and the Rector's wife, Kate saw few persons.

It may seem strange that Kate did not look for the assistance of other ladies in her missionary work. There were many obstacles ; the first was the paucity of persons of her own sex whom she could make companions of, and the disinclination of others to aid her.

Mrs. Jones and her daughter occasionally gave their help, but the former, being very stout, disliked walking, and Miss Jones had delicate lungs, which prevented her from going out of doors in uncertain weather.

To Kate personally it was a matter of felicitation that she should stand alone until her extended plans involved the necessity of the co-operation of others. She did not require the stimulus of applause; in all that she attempted to accomplish she was actuated by a sense of right, from which as much selfishness as is possible was excluded.

The County neighbours said she had become religiously mad; that that affair of hers had turned her brain. Most people pitied her, but none of her dear friends whose beauty she used to eclipse at the balls wished her to return to her old sphere; therefore they said they hoped she would persevere in her good works, and wondered why no persons followed her example.

"Don't talk nonsense, my dear," said Mrs. Davis to her daughter, who had made an observation like the foregoing. "It is quite possible to be a perfect lady, and to enjoy all the advantages of your position, without losing the merit of being a Christian. I am sure, my dear, I never missed a ball that I could go to, and I still hope to go to heaven."

"In a low dress and satin shoes," said Charley, who came into the room at this moment.

"Hush, sir! You are wicked."

CHAPTER X.

ROUTINE.

No two ivy leaves are precisely alike—no two human faces are the same—no two souls perfectly resemble each other; so every life is different, if not outwardly, at least inwardly. Though apparently ground in the mill of uniformity, as thousands seem to be—though, in the broad characteristics of their existence, millions are hardly distinguishable from each other; yet when we approach the intellectual and spiritual being with the desire to inquire into its native modes of thought, action, hopes, fears, and aims—then an infinite variety meets our gaze. “Man is the noblest study of man.” The magnitude of the subject—the importance of the inquiry—the momentous results involved in his destiny, by turns fascinate and appal the student, whose mind oscillates between the longing to search through all he feels and sees, to reach the esoteric law, and the hopelessness of attempting to ascend an eminence sufficiently lofty, whence he might behold the panorama of life spread out before him in all its grandeur and sublimity, where the relation of the parts to the whole would be clearly discerned.

In default of this, turn we to the contemplation of the microcosm—to the individual universe, where, as we see in spheroid mirrors, every object is reflected, though diminished in size; so in the soul of every one of us is hourly, daily being enacted a miniature drama, corresponding to that of the greater world. Let states or conditions be substituted for places, and the resemblance is complete. The soul has its battle-fields, where the hosts of good and evil thoughts are ever engaged in conflict—its pulpit, where conscience preaches—its temple, where God dwells—its sabbaths, where rest is enjoyed. It has also its prison, where the rack of remorse is found—its judgment hall, where sentence is passed on every action—its senate house, where knowledge is debated—its gallery, where the beautiful is stored up—its treasury, where the riches of truth are secured, and its sacred shrine inhabited by love.

Strife and debate, turbulence and factiousness, anguish and fear, no less than peace and joy, hope and faith, love and worship, are to be found within the bounds of one soul. He who knows himself has a key to the knowledge of mankind; whatever differences exist are only in degree.

In laying bare truthfully only one state of an individual mind, a contribution is made to the knowledge of man. Up the great world's altar stairs we are all of us toiling, who understand the meaning of being. Some ever remain in the midst of the gloom that surrounds the base, as if they were appalled by the bril-

liancy of the summit, where in the unapproachable light the Divinity dwells. Up and still higher do the noblest press ; every step won is a history in itself, from which we all might gain some truth, either by way of confirmation of what we ourselves have known, or else as a guide to our farther progress. Each step gained is a victory, often the triumph of a hard-fought battle, in which the powers and principalities of the air have suffered defeat. Every step retained renders the next easier, until the crown of life is reached.

Our individual trials are great, yet let no man suppose that he alone is tempted. Our neighbours' load seems always light to bear, we only sustain a burden. So saith every soul, as he presses onward, groaning with his weight of cares.

The ledger lay open on the desk before Eveleyn, as he sat staring vacantly at the page ; the day-book, from which he had commenced to post, lay unnoticed by his side, and his right hand rested on a pile of letters which he had just read. He had work to do, lost time to make up, but the spirit of apathy (call it laziness if you like) brooded over him, and paralysed his energies. Again and again he took up his pen, and put it down ; he felt that it was a sad exhibition of weakness, and yet he stared at the ruled pages in vain.

"Nature has not made me a man of business, my soul revolts at the tyranny of routine ; I am linked to a destiny that sickens me, to an eternal round of aimless nothings."

"Nonsense, Eveleyn, you are idle ; there is nothing in your duties that an honest man should rebel against, you are simply whining over lost ease and useless indolence. Arise, be stronger, husband your minutes, methodize your life ; you will accomplish wonders in a short time, and the first great victory will be over yourself."

The reply to this exhortation was that he laid his head upon his arms crossed on the desk, and went to sleep. Many similar contests did he wage ; sometimes he beat the enemy back, at others he was overcome, but his triumphs became more numerous at last, and himself more contented. Still he never looked at a column of figures without an inward shudder, and it rarely occurred that he could add up a page of cash entries without forgetting the sum midway to the top, when his mind would rush off on the wings of some vagrant thought.

At times he suffered much from despondency ; his occupation was uncongenial to his tastes, and his life seemed barren. Again these moments of dejection would pass away, and reflecting that all his father's liabilities had been met, he would take heart, and indulge in the dream of success.

For the first few months he gave up study ; occupied all day in the office or the mill, at night he became so weary that he was glad to retire to rest early, and take up his daily burden betimes in the morning. This state of things could hardly last for ever, the intellectual life pined for food ; this want became the strong

necessity of his being, and he felt compelled to gratify it at any cost. Other books were now to be seen in his office than the ledger; history and philosophy, in cloth and boards, contrasted with the sheep-skin clad records of purchases of rags and sales of paper, so that often a day's work was postponed to the morrow and the next day, until a vigorous effort was made to square up arrears, and thus his labour became frequently spasmodic.

"This must not be," he used to say to himself; "no man can ride two horses for any length of time; literature will reject me, and business will throw me over. Let me be constant to my duties for a few years, let me get the boys settled and Lilla provided for, then, without ties, I can strike out in the stream of letters, and sink or swim."

Not at first, not for a year, but at length he succeeded in systematizing his efforts, so that no time actually required for the duties of his bread-getting labour was trenched upon, and he was surprised to find how much he was enabled to accomplish in the course of the twenty-four hours. He who had hitherto had the command of every hour, who could ride, or shoot, or walk, or read whenever he chose, who never refused an invitation to a pleasant party, now found that he must relinquish the frivolities of his butterfly existence and map out each day into allotments.

Breakfast at eight, walk to the mill, ascertain the particular engagements of the hands employed, and inspect every department; at eleven the post came in;

then there were letters to write and bills to advise, payments to acknowledge, purchases to make, sales to effect, accounts to copy, &c., and thus till dinner-time at half-past two; at four, or a little before, he returned, and then with a book or newspaper in hand he superintended the workmen, if the office duties had been accomplished in the morning; at half-past six he returned to tea, and sometimes remained at home for the evening, but very often he again went back to the mill for two or three hours.

If he sacrificed pleasure, he received material gain in increased profits, by pruning unnecessary expense, and keeping every man to his task, so at the end of the half-year he found himself sixty pounds richer than he anticipated, with the prospect of a greater increase at the end of the next six months.

Withal it was a wearisome life, an unending round, a wretchedly monotonous existence. Did Eveleyn become accustomed to it?—Yes. Reconciled?—Never. Stern duty only held him in the track. The reflection that he was doing right soothed, but did not cheer him; the love of approbation was naturally strong in his heart, and his path was too retired and his victories too personal to win the stimulus of applause from his fellows.

Had any one said to him, "Eveleyn, you are a modest fellow, but you like others to appreciate your modesty," he would probably have replied, "Sir, your disregard for the truth is only equalled by your impertinence;" but Eveleyn, like many other very well-

meaning young men, did not thoroughly know himself.

Who does? Is it because the object is too near for the focus of mental vision that so much doubt prevails as to our self-knowledge? Who can fathom the laws of motives, who can analyze the countless conditions of his own mind, or attempt more than rude guesses at the truth? Doubtless self-examination is a healthy exercise, but great candour and honesty of purpose are necessary when we proceed to the critical study of our own souls.

Eveleyn saw very little of Mrs. Aylmer now, and as long as he was removed from the fascination of her society he felt stoical and held high resolves. At the same time he owned to himself that it was good to be preserved from temptation. He had one failing in common with very common men, that with the attainment of an object his regard for it diminished.

He often accused himself of this weakness. "Egotist that I am, I hate my cold, selfish nature. I know how base it is to win a woman's love when you cannot return it. The law says you must not take her life, which is of secondary importance to her, but if you rob her of her affections, a greater treasure, there is no other judge but conscience and God. The first does not afflict one too severely for little acts of gallantry, and we always cheat our souls with the persuasion that somehow we shall make atonement to the Deity before he pronounces sentence. From my heart I wish that I could make her amends. I wonder, if Kate Howard had favoured

my suit, would I have tired of her? Who can tell? Oh, that I had some one to love! The heart is a garden planted with priceless flowers of affection, mine is becoming overgrown with weeds."

Jack Hilton was a frequent visitor at his house; it did not require much penetration to discover that Lilla was the great attraction. Eveleyn confessed he would be sorry to lose her, the evenings would be so lonely without her. Lilla used to say to Jack, "Really, when Eveleyn comes home, he is so wrapped up in his books that I can scarcely get a word out of his lips. I know he loves me, but he shows it less than ever."

One evening in the spring, as Eveleyn was returning an hour before his usual time, he saw a lady and gentleman approaching him on the bank of the leet. "Oh! oh!" said he to himself, "pretty well for an unprotected female of eighteen."

"Good evening, Miss Lilla, and good evening, Mr. Hilton," said he, smiling; "coming to bring the old gentleman home to tea, I suppose?"

"Yes, Evy, dear," replied the young lady, "I was coming out from Mrs. Aylmer's when I happened to meet Mr. Hilton, and he said that the primroses were very pretty by the river side, and so I thought I should like some."

"Exactly so," remarked Eveleyn, wickedly, "and your companion is fond of pink primroses."

"Don't tease your sister, old fellow," interposed Jack, "or chide her for an act of grace in permitting me to enjoy her society for a few minutes."

"Certainly not," said the brother; "I love to encourage rural tastes, they are indicative of innocence. I dare say Adam and Eve went out picking flowers. Lilla has been doubtless cutting up her neighbours, while you were engaged in dissecting the difficulties of some friend, so there is a community of feeling between you, which I understand. But come and have some tea with us, Jack, and let us discuss the affairs of the nation, *id est*, our neighbours' business, after the manner of the Athenians and other philosophers."

The trio adjourned to the old house at the top of Main Street; and however sad or gloomy Lilla might have been at other times, she exhibited plenty of vivacity that evening. Was it because a certain good-looking gentleman watched her every movement, and flew to the tea-kettle or the bell, while his eyes met hers whenever she looked up, and his answers to Eveleyn's questions were so irrelevant that both brother and sister could not help laughing?

When the tray had been brought in, and the glass of grog sipped, his guest departed, and Lilla having gone to bed, Eveleyn drew the table near the fire, placed the candle at the edge, and with the light at his back and his feet on the fender, he opened the pages of "In Memoriam," and read the epithalamium.

He thought to himself, as he finished the poem for the tenth time, "the age of constancy is passed, or a woman who had once engaged the love of such a man as young Hallam could never have loved again. Better that it should be as it is; we have abolished the suttee

in India, why should we expect women in other parts of the world to sacrifice their affections to the memory of the dead? That reminds me I must have an explanation with Master Jack, although I am sure he is an honourable fellow, but I fear he can't afford to marry. If he does it will be a dreary life in this old house alone. Lilla married, and the boys in London, and myself, what? echo answers, What?"

About noon next day who should come into his office but Jack Hilton? "Are you very busy, Eveleyn?"

"Not too busy to attend to you."

"I have come on rather a delicate mission. Have you any objection to me as your brother-in-law?"

"None, personally, my dear fellow; but how do you know that Lilla will accept you?"

"I do not know that she will; perhaps I should have said, will you permit me to pay my addresses to her?"

"I am afraid you will think me mercenary, Jack, but can you keep a wife? You know Lilla has no fortune but what I shall give her, and unluckily that will be nothing at present, and only a small sum in prospect."

"Of course, of course. Eveleyn, if your sister was an heiress, my pride would not permit me to ask her to be my wife. Although it is opposed to all the rules of worldly wisdom, I would not marry a woman, were she an angel, if she possessed more money than myself. Fancy your wife saying to you in a tiff some day, 'All you have, sir, is mine; you would be a beggar but for

me.' No, no, I am not afraid to face the world ; I have a little capital, a thousand pounds, and my profession is worth to me two hundred a-year, while my practice, I am happy to say, is increasing. I shall be able to make a small settlement on my wife, and will insure my life for a like sum, so if anything happens to me she will not be unprovided for."

"You are just the man I took you for, candid and straightforward. Without flattery, there is no one I would entrust Lilla to rather than yourself. Benedicete," said Eveleyn, with the air of a septuagenarian. "Go, Jack, and try your luck with the young lady."

In the evening, on his return, Eveleyn, to his surprise, found his sister very much depressed, though she made an effort to be cheerful, but her eyes betrayed that she had been crying.

"I saw Jack Hilton this morning," said Eveleyn.

"Did you?" observed Lilla, with an air of affected indifference.

"Has he not been here?"

"Yes."

"And are you not very happy?"

"Why should I be happy?"

"I imagined Jack might have made himself agreeable."

"Then you are mistaken."

"Have you not accepted him?"

"Accepted him!—No."

"Dear me, what funny creatures you girls are! That which at one moment you appear to set the

highest value on, as soon as the treasure is in your reach, you cease to care for it."

"I don't understand you, Evy."

Eveleyn placed a chair beside the one on which he sat, and pointed to it, saying, "Come, and sit here, Lilla."

His sister came, and bending down he kissed her, an unusual act for him. She looked up, her eyes full of tears, and throwing one arm round his neck, rested her head on his shoulder.

"Now tell me all about it, Lilla: why did you refuse Jack Hilton?"

"Who told you that I refused him?"

"I infer so from what you said."

"I said I had not accepted him; but how do you know he proposed?"

"It is useless to attempt to escape, you little flirt; I have you now on the horns of a dilemma."

"I am not a flirt, Evy, and you know it."

"Nonsense, dear! all women are flirts; you cannot help your nature, flirting is instinctive in you. You know you gave Jack every encouragement, and as soon as he comes to the scratch you cry off."

"Evy!"

"Well, dear, is it not so?"

"No and yes; yes and no."

"A regular woman's answer; I mean, a contradiction."

"Don't be so sarcastic, Evy."

"Tell me, don't you love Jack?"

“Young ladies never like to make confidants, of their brothers. You should not ask me,” was the reply. “It’s very cruel of you, Evy, to wish me to leave you; whom have I left to love now but you? And if I go away, you will be all alone,” and she burst into tears.

“Don’t cry, dear, don’t cry.” After she had become a little more calm, Eveleyn said to her, “I perceive your disinterestedness, and love you for it, and I am confident that you have refused Jack Hilton entirely on my account. I need not tell you, Lilla, that as long as I have a home you will have one also; but if you love Jack, as I believe you do, the pain I should experience in losing you would be more than compensated by the knowledge that you had a protector in a husband who is, I think, worthy of you, and that is paying him the highest compliment that I can imagine. Remember, ere long, it is more than probable that we shall be obliged to leave Bricklinton, therefore, my dear child, I beg that you will only consult your own happiness, and by so doing you will ensure mine. I do not say to you marry Jack Hilton because I like him and he has proposed to you, but at any future time never refuse any person whom you love, merely that my home may continue to be made cheerful by your presence. I love you dearly for the consideration you have shown towards me. God bless you, Lilla! Think over what I have said, and now good night.”

It was Eveleyn’s turn to call on Jack next morning, and he found that gentleman looking as lugubrious as if he had breakfasted on parchment porridge.

"She has refused me, Eveleyn."

"So I find, old boy."

"You take it very coolly, I must say."

"Dear soul," said Eveleyn, "her conduct was entirely ruled by love for me, in total abnegation of self. I am not much of a match-maker, Jack. My advice is, don't commit suicide, but try again in a week. Good morning."

"Thank you, Eveleyn. Your message is like——"

But sentimental men do not appreciate sentiment in others, so Eveleyn slammed the door and cut the pretty sentence in twain.

In nine days' time Lilla and Jack were betrothed, and once more the three sat at tea in the old house.

"Did you see Mrs. Aylmer to-day?" asked Jack.

"Yes," replied Lilla.

"How is she?"

"Very poorly, poor thing; she is exceedingly depressed and nervous."

"Is it true that she has broken a blood-vessel?"

"Only a small one."

"I had not heard that," said Eveleyn, looking pale.

"She says," continued Lilla, "that she never sees you now. I wish you would call with me some day; it would be a great charity, as she has not left her drawing-room this month or six weeks, and she only cares for a very few people."

CHAPTER XI.

NEOL GY.

"Yes, or no," thought Eveleyn to himself; "yes, or no;" and before twenty-four hours had passed he was standing at Mrs. Aylmer's door. He found her lying on the sofa, a large shawl thrown over her feet, an open book in her hand, which rested on the back of the couch, and her little girl seated beside her, working.

She was very pale when he first entered the room, but ere he took the proffered hand a faint flush spread over her cheek. He had never seen her looking so beautiful; there was an air of pensive languor expressed in her features that painfully interested him. He could scarcely withdraw his eyes from her face, but she gave him no answering look.

"She has conquered," thought Eveleyn to himself, and he felt a chill in his own heart. Judgment cried "Well done!" Feeling confessed that the victory gave him no pleasure.

He could see the blue veins meandering beneath the white skin of the soft hand that rested for a moment in his. When she spoke a smile encircled her lips,

but it died away almost instantly. Now and then a look of suppressed pain swept like a passing shadow over her face, as summer clouds sweep over the moorlands, beauty and brightness before and behind them.

"I fear you have been very poorly, Mrs. Aylmer—far more so than I ever imagined."

"Thank you, I have been ailing, but I am quite well now, except a little weakness; and as soon as I can get out in the open air I shall recover strength. Is it warm out of doors to-day?"

"Not warm, but very hot."

"Perhaps it is, but I feel cold; I suppose I am not yet acclimatized, so long accustomed to an Indian sun. The great luminary never puts forth his power in these latitudes. Emma, dear, you are looking pale—go and tell William to take you out for a run."

"No, thank you, dear mamma, I would prefer to stay with you."

"It is very kind of you, my child, but it will please me if you will go out for an hour on the river walk—there will be nice shade there." The child obeyed.

"Now," thought Eveleyn, "we shall have a scene." He was disappointed, however. Mrs. Aylmer never for a moment referred to the past; perchance her manner was even cold.

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Evelyn, to pay a visit to such a stupid person as myself. I have been so languid of late, that all energy has been completely prostrated, and I am not able even to think. I lie here in a sort of dreamy trance, a semi-conscious state,

visited at times by angels, and often soothed by divine harmonies. Sometimes I think that, in such physical states of prostration as I now experience, the soul takes leave of the body for a season, and goes I know not whither; for certain it is that I have a strange apprehension of mysteries that I cannot altogether grasp, or define, or explain to another, just as if I was given the end link of a chain of silver thought, as an earnest of what the soul has gained in its wanderings, a chain that binds together the known and that which is now unknown, the mystery that will be solved hereafter."

Eveleyn could not forbear a smile. "If you have not reflected much of late, Mrs. Aylmer, your imagination has not been idle."

"Do not laugh; you strong man, with your cold reason and dialectic skill; give rein to fancy sometimes, and seek not always to weigh and measure every idea as if it were a pound of shop goods."

"I never do so—at least, I do not always adhere so much to system, Mrs. Aylmer. I am ever castle-building, but those glorious aerial edifices are more unsatisfactory than a child's soap bubble—they do not leave you any pleasure even in the retrospect."

"You are at heart a realist—my happiest hours are spent in the ideal realms. What I imagine to be true, and beautiful, and grand, and soul-satisfying, *may* have no existence here or hereafter; I may never even find the types—at least, I have not done so; but as long as I can forget the present in the contemplation of nobler, happier, purer, better things, it suffices me."

"But," said Eveleyn, "do your imaginations refer to this or the other life?"

"To both. It pleases me to picture the possible exaltation and perfection of our race. I see that we are capable of many great things, that we have an appreciation of the sublime in man. These imaginations had expression formerly in the idea of chivalry. Knight-errantry was a rude conception of highest truth, but in those days the gem was unpolished and rudely set."

"And what is the latest manifestation?" asked Eveleyn.

Mrs. Aylmer paused for a moment to reflect.

"Accustomed as I am to indulge in vague and uncertain thought, I have some difficulty in making intelligible to another many of my conceptions, which are, indeed, but fragments of ideas. As the poet says—

"Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown are broken and withdrawn."

As voyagers relate in approaching some rocky coast, the mountain peaks peer out above the clouds, while fog and mist render all beneath their summits invisible, so that those ice-pinnacles seem at first air-born; still they remain with the sunlight gleaming on their glaciers, and then they who see them know that the superstructure must have a base. So these cloud-born fancies of mine, reflecting the light of truth, convince me that they, too, have a foundation, even when I

cannot see it for the mist of ignorance. What is the latest manifestation? There are many. In politics, justice and honesty. In art, truth and power. In science, boldness and fairness. In the world, the dim recognition of the principle of love, as a living ruling power."

"I quite agree with you in one respect, Mrs. Aylmer—that is in the moral and intellectual progress of man, although I think your definition lax; for example, in politics, there have been just men in all ages, according to their notions. In art, moreover, we have had greater examples of truth and power in the past than we can now boast of; and the principle of love appears to me to be no more in operation in the present day than a thousand years ago."

"I am not disposed to dispute with you," replied Mrs. Aylmer, "as to the observations you have made respecting politics, art, and science; I merely introduced them by way of illustration, but I must say that I think your last remark untenable. Observe the term I made use of, 'dim recognition,' and compare it with what is going on around us—in the metropolis of England, for instance. Everywhere a higher tone pervades society, everywhere the obligation to love our neighbours is more deeply impressed on the mind. The band of men seeking to do good in Christ's name is every year augmented; wider and wider grows the circle of their operations, and more extensive does their usefulness become. Peers and prelates, laymen and ministers, are working in a noble cause—the emancipation of souls

from the fetters of hell.' And what constrains them? Love—love to God, reflected in love to man. When, then, we see these things, is it too much to hope for a greater diffusion of the celestial light that shines round the path of the faithful and just? These men lift themselves above the crowd, as the mountains overtop the hills; the sunrise glows upon their lofty heads; will not the dawn brighten into the perfect day? For my part, I have a strong hope."

"You are indeed enthusiastic, Mrs. Aylmer; more so than I have ever heard you before."

She looked up, half suspecting that he was indulging in quiet sarcasm at her expense.

"Yes, Mr. Evelyn, I am an enthusiast to-day; and because you have never met me in my present frame of mind, you imagine this state is new to me. I am not always what you have seen me," she said, a deep blush spreading over her face, and even tinting her neck. "My mind is protean in its character, whatever may be the mood I yield to. If I have been dreaming to day, I do not ask you to interpret my visions."

"I hope I have not used any harsh expression?"

"No! I am peevish."

"You have not finished your relation. What were you about to say respecting the other life?"

"I could," she replied, "say much; perhaps though I ought to practise reticence, lest what I am about to say might clash with your preconceived opinions of my character; but—I will not be personal. When lying on the sofa during the few last weeks, my thoughts, as

I have before told you, have taken many a distant flight ; some new combinations of ideas have been conceived, but for the most part I find I have been wandering in old paths, where I have often lost myself before. I have been glancing at the past history of man, and, as far as my knowledge of his annals extends, I have been endeavouring to trace the successive developments of his civilization ; what these stages are or have been I pass over in silence, but there is evidently one leading idea pervading his destiny, namely, ' progress,' and all the acts of nations and individuals, their crimes no less than their virtues, have contributed to this result. Their crimes indirectly, their virtues directly, yet both are subordinate to human destiny. Step by step up the ladder of preferment have they pressed, sometimes driven back awhile by opposing forces, yet in the aggregate ever ascending. A glorious flood-tide, yet, like the ocean, subject to countless changes ; now swept over by the storms of barbarism, now pent up in the caverns of superstition, anon swelling out in the sunshine, grand, sublime, and free. When to this picture you superadd the idea of personal immortality, then the great difficulty begins. It would be easy to read the enigma, or at least easier, were the dead of all ages simply regarded as the foundation on which the towers of civilization rest. If the countless myriads of the human race could be supposed to be used up as the materials of the mighty fabric of humanity, which the last ages shall see in all the magnificence of accumulated wisdom and grandeur, then

we should recognize in them the necessary, though humbler, parts of the great whole, who, in obedience to the necessity of pre-arranged order, were placed in a lower state of moral and intellectual being. Moreover, in this destiny of man there is manifestly a divine purpose linking the whole together, and a grand future is evidently in store for posterity. This I can understand; but when I reflect that man is an immortal being, and that this life is only a stepping-stone to a future state, that he stands in a two-fold relation, first to a world beyond, and secondly to the earthly destiny of his race; so many perplexing thoughts arise, that I pause bewildered, and should remain so did not one of my day-dreams carry me beyond; and the solution is this, that, instead of two divisions of souls only, the gradations are infinite. This does not interfere with the greater truth, that there are two great classes; but it seems to me that each class consists of infinite shades, that the world of spirits corresponds with the world of humanity, and that a similar process of moral and intellectual development is carried on beyond the grave, so that the known and seen is a type of the unknown and invisible."

"I have often pondered on this theme, Mrs. Aylmer, and I perfectly coincide in your opinions; indeed I cannot conceive any other satisfactory solution of the problem of our destiny. The conclusion you have come to appears to me to be perfectly in accordance with the goodness of the Creator, and affords us a grand conception of his infinite wisdom, justice, and

love. How much wiser and better should we be if we oftener turned to the contemplation of these and cognate themes ; each soul would feel himself to stand in immediate relation to the Divinity ; so we should take up our burdens willingly, knowing that our lives are not spent in unmeaning struggles, but that each worker wields a power that must leave its impression on the present, and in degree on all future ages. The echo of our voices rings even through eternal halls ; thoughts which are souls in action start into being here, and vibrate through infinity, and their manifestations will be exhibited in those degrees of spiritual glory which are now typified in the diversities of stellar brilliancy. I often think how St. John must have burned to declare those scenes which he was not permitted to reveal. How our souls pant for more particulars of the spirit-life, and yet, oh, wondrous contradiction ! it is here on earth we thirst for this knowledge, where probably it would not be applicable, and care little to press on to the day of emancipation from material fetters. Even in this state of being, sometimes the heavens seem to open, and glimpses of better things flash wondrously on the soul. Rarely, though, now rarely, because we lack child-like simplicity and earnest love, and would prefer to take heaven by storm, after the manner in which Milton represents the attempt of the rebellious angels, instead of perceiving the oneness of spiritual life which the regenerate are permitted to enjoy. Alas ! my knowledge of these truths is not experimental ; how, then, you might ask,

do you know that you are speaking the words of soberness and reason ?”

Eveleyn stopped.

“Go on,” said Mrs. Aylmer, “I am waiting for your explanation.”

Her companion resumed. “I might easily answer your question by referring you to revelation, but I presume you wish to know how I apprehend this truth?”

“Precisely so.”

“By the immediate influx of the Holy Spirit in a time of silent worship, when the doors of the heart are open, and Christ enters and dwells therein ; so saith the Society of Friends. But I have not enjoyed that exquisite purity of mind when I could declare that I felt my body to be a temple of the Divinity. A dimmer light has been accorded me, shining through the clouds of doubt upon a frigid nature ; yet even these straggling rays are precious, and suggest a brighter illumination. God is a spirit, an infinite spirit, he fills immensity ; our souls are spirits, eternal in duration, though limited in space. Likes have an affinity for likes ; the worlds, if they obeyed one law only, would rush together. All waters, when not restrained, blend together and become one ; all the rays of light have an affinity for each other, and a unity in their nature. If, then, these material things have a tendency to resolve themselves into homogeneous wholes, much more probable is it that all spirit, which is of one substance, will be found bound together by the links of a common nature. And when we start with the idea of

an infinite Spirit, the conclusion forces itself upon us that we stand in immediate relation to Him, as the rays of light are one with the sun. This, indeed, is the most perfect simile I can give you."

"If," said Mrs. Aylmer, "you follow your argument to its legitimate conclusion, it follows, you must embrace the devils in the same bond of fellowship."

"As spirits," remarked Eveleyn, "have one common essence, that is, are of like substance, therefore the fallen angels in this respect may be said to have something in common with all other spirit. The point, though, in which they differ is in their moral nature, which we are told is altogether evil. What privileges they have forfeited, what penalties they have incurred, we know in part. Whether hope, that comes to all, is denied to them, we cannot tell. It is a fruitless speculation to inquire if in the endless æons they may again become the object of God's compassion, whose mercies are over *all* his works; this, though, I will say, that as evil is repugnant to the Deity, it is hardly possible that he will suffer the effects of it to extend to endless duration, as methinks it would mar the perfect harmony of creation; and we do know that a time is appointed for the restitution of all things, and God has decreed that he will in the end be *all in all*. I little thought when I came here this morning that our conversation would have taken this direction. The subjects we have been discussing have often occupied my mind, but I never introduce them, because so much misapprehension prevails, and so few persons are pre-

pared either to follow the arguments, or to entertain calmly the legitimate conclusions they lead to. There is also another reason : these subjects are to me, I regret to say, too much matters of speculation, and too little the objects of feeling. In drawing near to the burning bush, Moses put off his shoes, because he trod on holy ground ; and in approaching even in thought the great Centre of light and life, we should take care that we do not enter upon the theme with unhallowed hearts."

"I admire your reverence," said Mrs. Aylmer ; "it speaks well for the direction in which you have turned your studies. Too many young men think blasphemy fine, and deem it a mark of superiority if they succeed in shocking their fellows by the unscrupulous boldness of their language. I have very much enjoyed our conversation—it has done me good, I am sure, physically ; and the grander our conceptions are of the benignity and mercy of the Deity, the more prone do we become to render him homage. To my mind there is no more delicious idea than is conveyed in the ecstatic exclamation of the First Voice—

"To feel, although no tongue can prove,
That every cloud that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love."

I hear my little girl's footsteps on the stairs, and I will release you from your captivity. Good-bye."

Why did Mrs. Aylmer turn her face to the wall when Eveleyn left the room, and give occasion to her daughter to ask, "Why is dear mamma crying?"

CHAPTER XII.

QUIET LIFE.

JACK HILTON's courtship went on swimmingly, and pressing his suit with a good deal of ardour, Lilla consented to shorten the period of her engagement ; so at the end of three months she became Mrs. Hilton, a loving and lovely bride. Eveleyn was thus rendered completely a bachelor ; he reigned alone in the old house, his two brothers living in London—Bob a medical student, George a city clerk. Once or twice Bob Edwards came over to spend an evening with him, but as he declined to accept his friend's hospitality in return, their meetings were few and far between. Eveleyn pleaded business, had no time for card-parties, could not afford whist—nobody believed him, though. His acquaintance used to say, "How close Eveleyn's become—a regular screw ;" The object of their criticism did not heed their remarks, but went on his quiet, unpretending path, if not rejoicing, at least sustained by the consciousness of right.

About a week after his sister's marriage, he had returned as usual from the mill to his solitary tea, bring-

ing with him the Times newspaper, which, from press of business, he had not opened.

Pouring out a cup of his favourite beverage, with a piece of dry toast nicely buttered on his plate, he tore off the cover, having determined to enjoy the news and his tea together. One after another he finished the leading articles in the Thunderer, and then turning over the page, he scanned the Foreign Intelligence, France, Austria, Hungary, all in rotation. India—what news from India?

“The following are the chief items of news from the Bombay Gazette. August 12th—money continues in good demand, &c. Madopolams are much higher. Domestics are little sought for. Mulls continue in good &c., &c. The Governor General is suffering from slight indisposition.”

A cold in the head, suggests the reader.

“Brigadier —— is to be succeeded in the command of the Bombay Garrison by, &c., &c.”

Observation number two. “How quiet everything is!”

“It is with unfeigned regret we announce the death of Colonel Aylmer, at Kurrachee, on the 20th of July last, when he was seized with cholera, and only survived the attack a few hours. This gallant officer, &c., &c.”

Eveleyn read no more. The intelligence painfully excited him. What effect would it have on Mrs. Aylmer? What changes would it cause in his own career? These were queries which he could not answer, and taking up his hat he gladly returned to the mill.

The intelligence of the Colonel's death was known

all over the town at breakfast-time next morning—several had seen it in the Times the day before; and the fact that Mrs. Aylmer was a resident in Bricklington, was sufficient reason to ensure the attention of the gossip pickers, who already had given out three different versions of the old soldier's will.

Firstly, he had died worth one hundred thousand pounds, all of which he had left to his wife. Secondly, that she had only a life interest in the property; and thirdly, that he had cut her off with a shilling, all of which statements were purely imaginary. In due time those who were better informed understood that the Colonel had left behind him thirty thousand pounds, in which his wife had a life interest; but in the event of her marrying a second time, she would lose everything except her marriage settlement, which she could leave to whom she chose.

"She will never be such a fool as to pay thirty thousand pounds for a husband," said Miss McCatty—"so Mrs. Aylmer will never change her name again."

"It's impossible to say," observed Mrs. Davis, "what absurdities people will commit in matrimony. I should have thought that my son Charles would have never made a mistake, and see how he has been the victim of a designing young woman, whom I had treated with motherly care."

"Just so," said Miss McCatty. "She felt your kindness, and resolved to secure a better right to it by marrying your son."

The reader must understand that during the past month, namely, in August, the pride of the Davises had experienced a severe shock ; the hope of the family, Mr. Charles Walmer Davis, having contracted a clandestine marriage with Miss Nutry, his mother's maid, a very pretty girl, who knew how to direct the fire of her flashing black eyes straight to the heart of her mistress's son ; and who had sufficient resolution to keep him at arm's length until she was securely united to him in the civil bonds contracted at the Birkhamstead Register Office, much to the horror of the County families, who forgot the little peccadilloes that had taken place in former times, as if events did not reproduce themselves, moving in cycles. Moreover Master Charley's gallantry had the sanction of the law ; as much may not be said for all the scions of families of *good* blood and *pure* descent.

What a habit writers and talkers acquire of digressing, like the old-fashioned diners out and reelers home, who always experienced a head wind and heavy sea when they set out to return, which caused them to tack backwards and forwards and roll fearfully. How they digressed, those jolly old dogs, now from the right line, and ever from right conduct.

In due time Mrs. Aylmer received her sympathizing friends, among whom was Mrs. Hilton, who had returned with her husband from their wedding tour, in which they exhausted the English lakes, and saw the highest and lowest society in London ; namely, on the

top of the Monument, and at the bottom of the Thames Tunnel.

The young widow and the young bride enjoyed a great deal of each other's company. After the former had returned her calls, she remained as much aloof as ever from her husband's relatives. Truly there was a great gulf between them, which nothing save necessity could have bridged over. We do not mean to say that there were no ladies in Clayshire who might have been agreeable companions for the Colonel's widow, but of all her County acquaintance, with the exception of Kate Howard, who no longer moved in society, there was no one with whom she had anything in common. She had seen the world, and knew that all that is worthy was not bound by the limits of Clayshire. She had moved among the real aristocracy, and could not appreciate the tinsel counterfeit.

It was a matter of perfect indifference to her that the Davises of Waterpark had lived in the same house since the wars of the Roses. There was an old beech on the lawn of like antiquity, but the ancient tree could not become a companion. There was a horrid whisper indulged in by the scandal-mongers, that a great-great-uncle of Mr. Howard once kept a druggist's shop in Bricklinton, actually sold "penn'orths" of salts to ploughboys, and dispensed hair oil to seamstresses. But she heeded not the frightful tale. The petty grandeur of squirearchs, their quarrels for precedence; their jealousies and rivalries; their intolerance and exclusiveness amused her at a distance, but it was to

severe a dispensation to live amongst them ; to become imbued with their notions, ground down to their level, and infected with their prejudices.

Why then did she remain at Bricklington ? Had Mrs. Aylmer been asked doubtless she would have been provided with a sound reason. Nobody, however, put the question to her.

In due time, having proper regard for the usages of society, the young widow spent an occasional evening at the Hiltons, driving over to their house in a fly. It was a very strange coincidence, but nevertheless true, that Eveleyn's studies or business, however pressing on other occasions, never interfered to prevent him from joining his sister's table when she received her friend.

What pleasant evenings those were. Lilla, in some becoming dress, doing the honours of the tea-table ; Mrs. Aylmer, quiet, not very much cast down, sometimes sarcastic, always intelligent ; Jack Hilton, full of wit and pleasant humour, his face exuberant with joy ; and Eveleyn, grave or gay by turns, and not unfrequently sentimental.

Now and then they played whist, or Mrs. Aylmer and Eveleyn engaged in chess. Sometimes, indeed almost every evening, music formed a part of the amusements, mingled with cheerful conversation. And when Mrs. Aylmer's carriage was announced at midnight, Lilla would exclaim—"Impossible ; it cannot be so late ;" or Eveleyn would say—"The time flies faster than ever."

A painter can give every semblance in his picture, but if there were no shadows to relieve the eye, what a sense of pain it would excite in the organ of vision. A writer who depicts a scene where one smile is constantly followed by another, will have no small difficulty in ensuring a perpetual smile on the countenance of his reader.

"I won't have you for a partner this time, Jack," said his wife laughingly, "you made me revoke last time."

"Oh! you little sinner, I hope you may be forgiven," replied her lord and master, "but you shall have your own way in common with the rest of your sex."

"Polite to us, are they not, Mrs. Aylmer?" observes Eveleyn, "they seem so careful of our wishes."

"Lilla," says her husband, "is anxious to show off her brother's inimitable temper by becoming his partner and spoiling his play."

"Monster!" ejaculates the insulted lady, pretending to inflict a box on her husband's ear, which gave her an excuse for kissing him.

The preliminary arrangements completed, the quartet sat down.

"Cut for deal," says Jack, "Lilla's deal."

"Shall I deal for you?" asks Eveleyn.

"No, thanks, my dear," and the cards flew round the table.

"Ace of clubs, I declare," exclaims Jack; "that means you will be beaten by a stick, my dear."

"And an old stick, yourself of course," rejoined the

dealer, laughing at her own wit, in which the rest joined. "It's your lead, sir. Trumps, I declare!"

So the game went on.

"Three by cards and two by honours! a treble, Master Jack," exclaimed Lilla. "I knew Evy and I would beat you."

The rubber finished, and the young lady's predictions fulfilled as to the result, she sang one or two songs.

Then Mrs. Aylmer played one of Beethoven's sonatas, and sang some selections from Handel.

Indeed, since the Colonel's death, she had eschewed all operatic and lighter music. Although she did not love, she respected the memory of her late husband, and it was only on some evenings she could be induced to sing at all.

Jack Hilton suddenly broke in—"Oh! I forgot to tell you, there is likely to be rare fun at the petty sessions to-morrow. All Salmon's servants have summoned him for non-payment of wages, and he, on his part, is going to prosecute them for petty larceny, because he found them eating apples in the kitchen, which they had obtained from the store-room."

"He must be deranged," said Mrs. Aylmer; "one would think he came of an old family."

Eveleyn smiled—"Is that cause and effect?"

"Invariably, unless there has been an infusion of new blood on one side."

"Mr. Salmon will surely never allow the affair to proceed," said Lilla.

"I only know, my dear," said her husband, "that

the servants are my clients, and no compromise has been proposed. With all his idiosyncrasies, Salmon is at heart a despot. I am sure he would enjoy driving slaves on a plantation. How he would enforce order at the expense of whipcord ! Apropos of order, I was told a very good story the other day of an old whaling captain :—Himself and two or three others were enjoying a bowl of punch at the Jerusalem Coffee House, and the conversation turned on discipline.

“ ‘ You can’t do without the lash,’ said one. ‘ Sailors are all the better for a taste of the rope’s end now and then ; but some cap’ens uses handspikes, and that’s too severe.’

“ ‘ I’ve commanded a ship this twenty years,’ said an old sea dog, ‘ and I never lifted a han’ agen a man, and nobody was ever better sarved than me.’

“ One of the party had hitherto remained silent. ‘ What’s your opinion, Cap’en Lawson ?’ asked the first speaker.

“ ‘ I quite agree with Cap’en Squid,’ said he ; ‘ I never approved of the cat.’

“ ‘ Then how did you maintain discipline ?’

“ ‘ Oh ! in the easiest way in the world. Whenever a fellow was a little troublesome I called the cooper and knocked the head out of a good-sized cask, put in a little biscuit, with a jar of cold water, and drew out the bung. Then I clapped the vagabond in, headed him up, and let him bide till he came to. In difficult cases I’ve had to give the cask a roll or two on the quarter deck ; and ’twas wonderful how it tamed the inhabitant.’

“ ‘ No ! no ! ’ said Captain Lawson, ‘ I hates the cat ! ’ ”

“ Your friend,” said Evelyn, “ must have been a relation of the sentimental slave-owner who said he couldn’t abide the idea of taking human life. ‘ But when a nigger offends me,’ he continued, ‘ I shut him up for a week or so without food, and natur’ doos the job for me.’ ”

“ Horrible, Eveleyn,” cried Lilla, “ how can you tell such stories.”

“ The gentlemen are tired of our society, Lilla,” said Mrs. Aylmer. “ I think I hear my carriage at the door.”

CHAPTER XIII.

NOTHING NEW.

THE months rolled slowly on for Eveleyn. The monotony of his life affected his spirits, and he became almost gloomy. There was another reason for his melancholy state, and, as is so often the case when men get out of sorts, a lady was the prime cause.

He had loved Mrs. Aylmer when the passion should not have existed; he had conquered it by a stern effort. Now, however, that she was free, what course should he pursue?

Did he love her sufficiently well to make her his wife? He felt he did. But—there is always some horrid but!—but could he, a poor man, afford to sacrifice his independence by marrying a woman of property? Moreover, as he knew that Mrs. Aylmer would lose all but her marriage settlement, in case of a second union, the question arose—was he justified in asking her to make such a sacrifice for him? On the other hand, he thought, “yielding to a wild impulse she has placed herself in a false position, for which step I also am responsible. Can I do other than offer to make her my wife? and thus we shall both prove our

sincerity." The greater part of a year had elapsed since her husband's death, so there could be no impropriety in making his sentiments known to her.

"Ah," said he, stirring the fire, "how delightful it would be to have the society of such a woman as Mary Aylmer during these long evenings! I am already weary of my solitary life, and my books do not please me as they used. My fate shall be decided before the week is out;" and having made this sage resolution, he went to bed.

In ten days from this time he again stood in the drawing-room of Mrs. Aylmer's lodgings. He found her alone, seated by the fire, an "occasional" table at her elbow, which was covered with books and papers.

She rose to meet him as he entered, greeting him with grave politeness, so that all Eveleyn's courage ran down into his boots. "It is very extraordinary," thought he; "a few months ago and Mrs. Aylmer was ready to throw herself at me; now she is so metamorphosed in manner that I cannot understand her." Contrary to his usual custom, Eveleyn began to recount the current gossip of the day.

Mrs. Aylmer heard him in silence for a little, then looked up at her visitor, and said with a smile, "Mortal, after all."

"What do you mean?"

"That you, too, are tainted with the littleness of this town, and are evidently fitting yourself to shine at a Dorcas' party."

"Mrs. Aylmer, I—I—I——"

"I do not like gossip under any circumstances, and Mr. Evelyn as a gossip-picker is not the person I once knew."

Eveleyn blushed up to his eyes, at the same time feeling very angry. "What would you have me talk about?"

"Am I also changed that you think it necessary to ask such a question? Pray speak on any subject; if I do not understand it, at least I can listen."

"Are your ideas always under such complete control, Mrs. Aylmer, that you can start off on any theme at once? Are there not moments when both the power of thought and expression are temporarily paralyzed, and you feel that you would give anything for words? At best, I cannot always clothe my ideas in appropriate language; many thoughts struggle for utterance and die inarticulate, that I have a dim apprehension of; many days, when I wish most to speak, and speak well, I am as unentertaining as a mummy. Videlicet, this morning—yes, I feel that I am very stupid."

"And is that the mood in which to visit a lady?"

"I fear, Mrs. Aylmer, that I am not a welcome visitor. If I am *de trop*, I will bid you good morning."

"As you please," said the lady, looking very pale.

Eveleyn rose from his seat, covered with confusion. Too proud to speak or ask for an explanation, he left the room, saying to himself, "I did not expect this reception, neither did I deserve it."

When he reached the bottom of the stairs, he found

that he had left his hat behind him. "I will send the servant for it," said he, but there was no servant in sight, therefore, after a moment's deliberation, he determined to go himself. He tapped at the drawing-room door, but received no reply; he tapped again and again without an answer. "I presume she has left the room," thought he, and he opened the door.

To his dismay and horror, Mrs. Aylmer lay extended on the hearth-rug motionless, colourless, apparently lifeless. He rushed forward, and raised her head; he was so excited that he could not perceive the gentle respiration and the faint pulse. "Oh, God!" he exclaimed, "she is dead!" He violently rang the bell, but no servant came; as he found afterwards, he was in the house alone with the invalid. Then a thought flashed across him, "Perhaps it is a fainting fit;" and lifting the slender frame in his arms like a child, he placed her on the couch, sprinkled her face with water, chafed her hands, applied sal-volatile to her nostrils, and in little more than a quarter of an hour his patient exhibited symptoms of returning consciousness. Two or three deep sighs, then she stared wildly, murmuring, "Where am I?"

"In your own drawing-room, Mrs. Aylmer."

By degrees the cloud passed over, and the sunlight of intelligence beamed on her brain. She feebly put out her hand; Eveleyn took it, and gently pressed it, kneeling down by her side. She seemed more lovely than he had ever seen her; her black dress contrasted with her clear white complexion, from which every par-

ticle of colour had fled, so that she looked like a marble statue imbued with life. Their eyes met, he bent forward and kissed her, and throwing her arm round his neck she held him there, while the tears coursed down her cheeks.

“Why do you cry?” said Eveleyn.

“Because I am so happy.”

“Do you love me?”

“Better than life, and I thought you were lost to me for ever. Oh, Eveleyn! this is more happiness than I deserve! Am I your own—only yours?”

“Yes, Mary, mine for ever.”

It created a nine days’ wonder in Bricklinton, the story of Mrs. Aylmer’s engagement to young Eveleyn.

“Better late than never,” was Miss McCatty’s remark.

Mrs. Davis said that a man when he marries a woman of humbler station than himself raises her to his own rank (comfort in prospect for Mr. Charles); but when a woman marries a person beneath her, she sinks to her husband’s level.

Mrs. Ethelfield observed, that love-matches were in accordance with natural principles, and for her part she admired a woman who had courage to face opinion for the object of her choice. The good lady doubtless thought of her own courtship.

As for Lilla, she was rejoiced; and Kate Howard, what did she say?—Simply, “God bless them!”

We fear the three months that intervened before Eveleyn’s marriage were not devoted so much to

business as they might have been ; the number of his solitary hours also grew very few, neither did he find much time for study. But the summer evenings were delicious out of doors, and Mrs. Aylmer's strength greatly increased, so that she could enjoy long walks, not by the river side, for the crowd strolled there, but in country lanes, where the ash and the elm arched over the way, and the honeysuckle blossomed ; where there were no intruders but the bats, and no lookers-on but the stars.

What delicious hours those were—Eveleyn will never forget them—when, in the full confidence of affection, his Mary told him all that her heart had hitherto treasured up, told him that she not only loved but respected him, that he was her saviour, and that his strength and resolution (though she hated him for a time) only served to strengthen her admiration and bind her soul to him in new and stronger bonds.

Why should they delay marriage ? Neither of them had any one to consult. So Eveleyn called in a painter and upholsterer, and effected some improvements in the old house. New carpets were bought, new paper was put on the dining and drawing-room walls, a new mirror over the chimney-piece in the latter apartment, sundry minor articles of ornament and table appointments were purchased.

Then came the wedding day, when Mrs. Aylmer put off her mourning, and arrayed herself in bridal robes. The trousseau came from London, and fabulous stories were told of its cost.

"I suppose," said Miss McCatty, "she's making the most of her jointure. All that I can say is that her husband is a dear young man at the price."

If the objects of these kind remarks had heard them, they would probably have remembered Solomon's advice, "Take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." At any rate, none of their critics had the power to delay their nuptials; so the bells that had clanged in the steeple for the great and the good, the rich and wicked, the happy and unhappy marriages, rung out their merriest peal for them.

Several ladies had the curiosity to get into the organ gallery and peep at the bridal party behind the curtains; and long before noon every article of Mrs. Evelyn's dress, and how she behaved at the altar, and how the bridegroom's responses could be heard through the whole church, were familiar as household words throughout every dwelling in Bricklinton.

During the absence of the couple on their wedding tour, the social council of ten proceeded to decide their fate.

They did not meet in one room, neither were the members of the board bound to secrecy. On the contrary, they adopted the principle—"the more public, the more private," and discussed the question everywhere—at the corners of the streets, in the market places, at the feasts of the Scribes and Pharisees. The members came robed in muslins, in silks, in bareges, in kid boots, and Parisian gloves and bonnets. Opinions

were divided. Some said Eveleyn was himself a gentleman, although a tradesman ; that he had married a lady, and for her sake they ought to be visited.

The opposition replied, that if Mrs. Aylmer chose to marry a paper-maker she must take the consequences, and to notice her would only give encouragement to others. The Miss Smythes and Miss Thomases were indignant at the very idea ; indeed they would not submit to anything of the kind.

Their observation afforded Miss McCatty an opportunity to remark, " that society was more exclusive now than in their fathers' time."

Whereupon the young ladies grew silent and became red.

The Smythe and Thomas pedigree having, half a century previously, strayed respectively into a chemist's and draper's shop, it was reserved to Mrs. Davis of Waterpark to give the coup de grace to the question.

" For my part," said that lady, " we shall take no notice of them."

" Of course not," said all the waverers in chorus. So the point was settled. Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn were not to be called on.

In seven weeks' time the Bricklinton bells were again set in motion, when the bride and bridegroom returned from their wedding tour.

Lilla and her husband were waiting to receive them ; the former flew into her arms, saying, " Welcome ! welcome home, my dear sister !" adding, in a breath, " how well you look."

"Thanks, dearest Lilla, and you are blooming too; and, Jack, how are you?—I suppose I must abolish the Mister now."

It must not be supposed that Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn were ostracised entirely. The *crème de la crème* excluded them. The lords of horses and hunters; the Miss Dianas and the Master Nimrods; the Baronet's family, and their cousins; the Archdeacon and his lady, and their set; all of these good people held aloof. Not from fear of moral contagion, not because of felt intellectual supremacy, but because society demanded it.

The Ethelfields called, and all the professional men and their wives. But medical men always make the acquaintance of newly married couples; and as people may get into trouble, and as many make their wills, and all men die, the lawyers find it pays to do the polite. Then there were some of his father's old friends—the banker, a retired merchant or two, and a few others. So if the bride and bridegroom wanted society, they could have found plenty of people willing and ready to eat their cold chickens and ham, and drink their light sherry at 28s.

But, for some reasons best known to themselves, they declined all visiting. Of course their friends said that Evelyn wanted to get into the county set, and therefore began by discarding the town. It never entered anyone's heart to believe that because Mrs. Evelyn was not strong, she felt obliged to avoid racketing from the first, and wisely judged that it would be far easier to give up society than to select

particular families, which would appear invidious. The young couple could afford to live down scandal; they were so happy within themselves that they cared for no other company than their own little family circle.

Mrs. Aylmer knew what it would cost her to become Mrs. Evelyn; but having found a man in whom she could see more than dim traces of that creature who was pronounced to be made in the Divine image, and having known so many counterfeits, though not so blinded as to be unable to perceive that the primal inscription "good" bore traces of wear and tear—yet the impress was clearly legible, whereas in most instances she remarked that it was worn out, or, perhaps, nothing left but the letter D, which might have signified Diabolus. Having thus found that which the old Greek sought with his lantern at noon-day, she esteemed it a prize, and treasured it above all earthly things.

When sometimes her husband used to say—"You see, Polly, your grand friends cut you now," she would reply—"You merely make that remark to hear me say that I married *you*, and not the society of Clayshire. I have made my election and do not repent of my choice."

To the general rule of excluding the Evelyns there was one exception, in the person of Kate Howard. She and her father called, and the ladies were evidently mutually pleased with each other, an impression which the return visit rendered stronger, for Kate found that the conversation of Eveleyn and his wife supplied a want that she had long felt. In their society she could ventilate whatever opinions or ideas she had stored up,

and, like money lent, the distribution of what mental wealth she possessed came back to her with interest. It was only when they touched on doctrinal points she found a want of harmony.

With the winter Mrs. Evelyn's cough returned, so that she became a complete prisoner, never venturing out of doors even to church. Strange to say, she did not regret it much, because she saw more of her husband, and of him she could never see too much. If he looked up from his book when reading, their eyes always met; if he moved about the room, she followed him with her glance; and when sometimes he felt lazy, and used to throw himself into the arm-chair, she used to sit by his side, pushing back the hair off his forehead, or running her hand through his curls, all the while watching the expression of his face, her own beautiful features being lit up with love.

Sometimes she used to sigh and look sad, and when asked what she sighed for, she used to say—"I am too happy; it cannot last."

"Nonsense, Polly dear, do you think I am going to turn Bluebeard!"

"No! no!" Then the dark shadow would pass away.

Occasionally they played chess together, but their general occupation was reading, or rather Evelyn read aloud, and long discussions would follow; though now she preferred listening to her husband to expressing her own opinions, and she used to hang on his words as if he were an oracle.

Verily Evelyn was in imminent danger of being

spoiled. If a man's wife absolutely succumbs to his opinions, if he be permitted to lord it out of doors and in, the chances are ten to one that he will become a dictator, and a very disagreeable fellow. The voice of a woman raised in the assertion of her rights is a wholesome corrective, and society can never estimate the debt of gratitude it owes the sex, that the natural overbearing tendencies of the lords of the creation are kept in subjection by countervailing influences at home.

"No man is a hero before his valet." Statesmen, warriors, poets, authors, what are ye in the presence of your wives? The man who has bid a senate tremble, if her ladyship is out of sorts when he returns, has in his turn to quake.

Is Tennyson a demigod to Mrs. Tennyson, when the laureate has a cold in his head, and she puts his feet in hot water, and hands him his basin of water gruel? What does Grisi think of Mario when he snores? Or if Mr. Disraeli has the toothache, does Mrs. D. recognise his genius when her lord's face is tied up in a flannel bag? Should Carlyle come into his drawing-room with dirty shoes, won't Mrs. Carlyle send him back to the mat? If the Countess saw Lord Derby shaving any morning, would she, in the distorted face reflected in the glass, see that grand expression which gives such a noble presence to the Tory chief?

No! no! keep your heroes at a distance. Like women at forty, they look better across the room. The stage scenery is magnificent from the boxes; at the wings the illusion is dispelled.

Eveleyn was not so attentive to business after his marriage. Some days he never visited the mill ; on others he would work assiduously ; but had it not been for James, his profits would have been easily summed up in one short word.

A great motive to exertion no longer existed ; his wife's fortune, invested in India, brought him in five hundred a-year, so that altogether he was in receipt of a handsome income. Still he did not like the idea of dependence, and determined to lay by as much money as he could every year, to enable him to launch out in some new undertaking as soon as the mill lease should drop. Meanwhile he availed himself of his leisure to resume his studies ; thus at the same time storing up material and intellectual wealth.

"Why not give up your mill, Eveleyn?" said his wife to him one day. "We have plenty to live on ; we are neither of us extravagant, and I am sure you do not like the business ; besides, it interferes with your studies, and I believe," she added with a sceptical smile, "you like your books better than your wife."

Eveleyn explained to her that the lease would soon expire, that his brothers were not well provided for, and he had determined to make the most of the property for the sake of his family, which could be done only by retaining the premises as long as possible, and then disposing of the plant, &c. He did not also tell her that, much as he loved his wife, he did not wish to be always dependent on her fortune.

CHAPTER XIV.

DE PROFUNDIS.

ONE evening in the latter end of February, Eveleyn was returning from the mill; he had just commenced the ascent of Main Street, when his ears were regaled with the music of a woman's voice of extraordinary sweetness and power.

A short distance in front of him stood the slight figure of the songstress; as he approached he observed that she was very thinly clad, and yet there was the remains of former grandeur in her dress. The shawl that was wrapped tight round her person was of Indian manufacture, and the rich colours gleamed forth in spite of wear and tear. Her bonnet was of simple straw, old but not torn, and her feet were encased in ragged boots, through which the wet mud found easy ingress. In her arms she carried an infant, carefully protected from the keen north-east wind, although the poor mother, for such she certainly was, shivered in the blast that whistled down the street, and carried up in miniature whirlwinds the bits of blue paper and broken straws that found refuge in the corners beside shop steps or warehouse doors.

Sweetly as she sang, her minstrelsy touched no hearts. The windows were pitilessly closed, and the few pedestrians drew in their chins beneath the collars of their coats and hurried on. Slowly, step by step, the wanderer moved down the street. When Eveleyn came near her, he remarked that the tears stood in her eyes, and a look of terrible anguish imprinted on her otherwise lovely face thrilled through his heart. It was as much as to say, "Give me money for the child's sake, even though I die." Where had he seen that face before? Surely he had seen it somewhere. As he passed the songstress looked at him as if she recognised an acquaintance, and her face momentarily brightened; but as he went on his way without distributing an alms, her countenance not only fell, but assumed an expression of bitterness.

Why was it that he who could give, who so often did give, who enjoyed the luxury of gratified benevolence, now withheld his charity? We shall see.

Eveleyn could not tell wherefore, but he was singularly attracted by the person of the mendicant, and he determined to see a little more of her before he interfered.

After going up the street some distance, he turned, crossed over, and in the rapidly deepening shadow of the houses slowly followed the singer.

Song after song she poured forth in the Italian tongue, but the hearts of the Bricklintonians were apparently fossilized by the cold, for no one gave her money, save one poor old woman who put something

into her hand. The shadows deepened, night came, the gas was lit, and the singer ceased to sing. Hurriedly traversing one or two narrow streets, she entered a baker's shop and purchased a penny roll; passing a milkman in the street, she drew a bottle from her dress into which the man poured (spilling some) a half-pennyworth of milk; carefully fitting in the cork, she placed the cold bottle in her bosom and walked on. On through a narrow, filthy lane, till she reached a low lodging house, into which she entered; but before Eveleyn came up, she was ejected by the landlady, who screamed at the top of her voice—"None of yer furren tramps shall stop in my house, who can't spend thrupence for a bed"—On, the mendicant tried other houses of like description, with the same result. The deep sob that burst from her bosom echoed in the archway from which she emerged in her last fruitless effort to get shelter. She retraced her steps. Eveleyn drew back into a doorway until she passed him, and again followed her as she walked in the direction of the river.

"She means suicide," he thought, and pressed forward, but the woman chose the roadway, and did not even approach the parapet of the bridge; was it because she feared the temptation would be too strong for her? About a quarter of a mile on the other side of the river stood a row of lime-kilns, one only of which was in use at that season of the year. The round pile of glowing stone and burning coal on the top cast a ruddy hue around; thither the poor wanderer bent her steps. Choosing the lee side, she sat upon a large

piece of limestone, and partly loosed her shawl, so that the child might enjoy the heat. The lime-burner came up to her, and apparently she made him some request, for he soon left her and returned with a saucepan in his hand and a spoon. Into this she poured the milk with some crumbled bread, placed it on the fire, and her baby's supper was soon prepared. The strong light thrown out by the glowing stone enabled Eveleyn, himself unseen, to watch all her proceedings. After the infant had finished, little remained but the crust for the mother, which she ate, then re-arranging her shawl she again covered up her child and settled herself on her seat. Eveleyn's curiosity was sufficiently gratified ; as he was ascending the steps beside the kiln, he heard the lime-burner say—" You must not stop here."

" Why ?"

" Because the steam will kill you if you go to sleep."

" Well, then, I won't sleep."

The man seemed satisfied, at least he left her.

Eveleyn waited till he had got into his hut, and then came forward.

The woman did not hear him approach, so laying his hand gently on her shoulder, he said—" You must come with me !"

The poor creature started, and turning round said, in the broken accents of a foreigner, " Are you the policeman ?" Eveleyn smiled.

" No, I am not !"

" Why should you order me away ?"

"I do not order, I only ask you to come."

"Come where?"

"To food and shelter!"

His tone of voice was so gentle and re-assuring, that the object of his charity at once obeyed him, and attended by his strange companion he hurried home as fast as the tired limbs of the woman could bear her.

Opening the door with his pass-key he bade her precede him into the house, for Eveleyn could not be discourteous even to a beggar, and it needed no second word to assure him that the stranger was one of a class superior to her present position.

Hearing his footstep in the passage his wife rushed out, exclaiming, "Where have you been, Eveleyn? dinner has been waiting an hour;" then, seeing another figure in the hall, she started back, saying, "Whom have you here?"

"One who needs all your care, Polly dear, which I am sure you will extend to her. Is there not a fire in the library?"

"Yes."

Then turning to his protégée, he said, "Come this way," and putting her into an arm chair close to the blazing coals, he returned to explain the mystery to his wife.

Having narrated that which the reader is already acquainted with, he continued, "Who she is I know not, and yet I have seen her before, but in a different character. It seems strange that I should have taken so deep an interest in this poor creature, when many

pass me in the street to whom I throw a penny and forget them, who probably are as deserving of sympathy as this stranger."

"You used to charge me with enthusiasm, Eveleyn," said his wife, smiling, "but you out-Herod Herod. Don't you think, dear, it would have been better to have taken her to some quiet inn, and given her into the landlady's charge?"

"Ah! Polly, that is a kind of benevolence that costs nothing but money, a few shillings expended that we should not miss, when, perhaps, in this case, we can do something better. I am confident this person is a lady. Whether I have done right or wrong in bringing her here time will prove, but the impulse that directed me was irresistible. While I change my coat do go in and speak to her."

Mrs. Evelyn found the stranger as her husband had placed her, reclining in the arm chair, still clasping her infant in her arms. She attempted to rise as the former entered the room.

"Don't move, pray," said Mrs. Evelyn, coming forward and stirring the fire; "you must be tired."

"Oh, madam," said the stranger, "it is so kind." She could not finish the sentence, and burst into a flood of tears, which would not be restrained.

"Do not cry, do not cry; you must be very cold and hungry, I will send you some soup." But the poor thing still wept convulsively. Mrs. Evelyn placed her hand lightly on her shoulder; it was so thin, even through the shawl she felt a hard ridge of bone.

"O God," thought she to herself, "what the poor suffer!"

After some time the emotion of the stranger subsided, but even when she attempted to speak a choking sob stopped her utterance.

"I will leave you for a little while," said Mrs. Evelyn, "and you must take the refreshment that I shall send you; try and calm yourself, and I will have some conversation with you presently."

The stranger thanked her with her eyes.

When she rejoined her husband in the dining room she said, "I don't wonder that you were interested in this poor creature. But she is too agitated to speak now. I will send her some soup and a glass of wine, and after dinner I will endeavour to learn her history."

Eveleyn and his wife accordingly adjourned to the library in little more than half an hour.

"Hush," said the latter, "she is sleeping." Both of them walked quietly to the fire-place.

The stranger had removed her bonnet, loosened her shawl, and, overcome with fatigue, and comforted with the refreshment she had partaken of, she had fallen asleep.

The red light played on her pale face and gleamed on her black hair. Distress and want had left their impress on her countenance, but it was still lovely.

"How beautiful she is, Eveleyn."

"Yes, dear."

"Do you know who she is?"

"No; yet, as I told you, I have seen her somewhere."

Presently the child opened its great black eyes, and seeing strangers, uttered a low cry.

Instantly the mother awoke. "My darling, my darling! what is the matter?" Then, seeing her host and hostess standing before her, she partly rose.

"Sit down, pray," said the latter; "my husband and myself have come to talk to you."

Eveleyn placed a chair for his wife, and standing by her side, said to the stranger—

"We cheerfully offer you our hospitality, and do not wish to be inquisitive; but as much as you feel disposed to tell us of your history we shall be glad to hear."

In a low, soft tone the stranger replied—

"I have nothing to conceal now, because I only live for my child, and for his sake I must speak. I am a native of Syra; my name was Deduci—until lately I thought I had the right to that of Levinge; but men's laws are not God's laws."

"Levinge!" said Eveleyn, "that scoun—"

"Don't speak ill of him," said Zizzi; "before Heaven he is my husband, and he is the father of my son;" and, brushing back the hair from his eyes, with an air of pride she put the infant to sit up on her lap, a fine boy some fourteen months old.

The reader has probably already divined who the street singer was.

When we last saw her it was in the gloom of night, on the terrace of Haughton Hall.

When the cold water of the moat closed over her head, instinctively the love of life returned, and the splashing which Levinge heard was not the struggling of a drowning woman, but the well-directed strokes of

an accomplished swimmer; an art which Zizzi had acquired from early childhood.

Reaching the bank, all the love in her turned to gall; she set her face from the walls of that house whose master had left her to perish, and bravely pressed on through the darkness, till she reached the shelter of a plantation, where she undressed, and wrung her clothes. Except that it rendered her garments lighter, the heavy rain made this precaution needless, and also prevented her appearance from exciting much curiosity at the railway station, which she reached at six in the morning.

Entering the refreshment room she was enabled to get a cup of hot coffee, that greatly revived her; and one of the guards, seeing how miserably wet she was, lent her a large wrapper. Taking her ticket for the neighbouring town of Lechfield, she arrived at the little inn where she had left her baggage a few days previously, and without rest she changed her clothes, proceeded by the next train, and arrived in London that evening. Driving to a quiet hotel that night, next morning she sought out an humble lodging for herself in the neighbourhood of Brompton.

Examining her worldly goods, Zizzi found that her property consisted of five pounds in gold, thirteen shillings and tenpence in silver, a gold chain and watch, three handsome rings and a locket, besides a very small wardrobe.

This was her capital with which she had to commence the world.

After many unsuccessful efforts, she, through the

interest of her landlord, obtained an engagement in a tradesman's family as a teacher of languages (being a proficient in French and Italian). Her salary sufficed to keep body and soul together, and nothing more.

At last her appearance excited suspicion, when, her history not being considered satisfactory, she was dismissed, and did not succeed in obtaining another engagement before her child was born.

During her illness her little money was exhausted, and she was obliged to sacrifice all her jewelry before her debts were paid.

In vain she attempted to obtain a similar situation to that she had last filled, and as a "dernier resort" offered her services as a vocalist in one of the concert rooms that abound in London. In this application she was successful, and for a time she was enabled to earn her livelihood with comparative ease, until, in consequence of repelling the advances of her employer, she was dismissed.

The experience she had gained in this occupation forbade her attempting to seek a similar engagement, and her resolution was rendered imperative by a bronchial attack which for a time deprived her of her voice. One by one she tried the various callings that destitute women endeavour to support themselves by; one by one her efforts proved unsuccessful, when necessity compelled her to enter upon the life of a street singer. Then she thought she would try the country, and wandering from town to town, at last arrived penniless in Bricklington. This was, in brief, her story to Eve-

leyn and his wife; she further told them all her previous history, with which the reader is acquainted, omitting, however, the scene on the terrace at Houghton Hall.

“God has, doubtless, led you here,” said Eveleyn; “do not let your mind be troubled for the future. Now I will leave you in my wife’s care.”

Zizzi could not thank him otherwise than with a look. Had she been a sister Mrs. Eveleyn could not have treated her with greater consideration. Tea had been brought in, which she thoroughly enjoyed; a fire was lit in a bed-room, every comfort provided, and the weary stranger put to rest with her child in a soft, warm bed, where murmuring a blessing on her new friends, she speedily fell asleep.

“It is a most providential circumstance that you have found and rescued this poor creature. She is so lovely, so loving, and so gentle, it exceeds my comprehension to understand how any man could abandon her. But how are we to provide for her future welfare, Eveleyn?”

“That is a question, Polly, that I cannot answer now. For the present we must clothe her and give her a home. I doubt not that we shall find some method of preserving her from a recurrence of her past misery.”

Food, rest, and kind treatment wrought wonders for Zizzi and her child; the latter toddled about the rooms, tumbled down, cried, and crowed like any other infant. It was a picture that would have made an artist’s reputation, could he have correctly depicted one of the many

scenes of daily occurrence in the drawing-room, when the two mothers watched the gambols of the little boy either alone or with Emma Aylmer, who had just returned from a long visit to her father's relatives in the neighbourhood of London. The contrast between the beauty of the blonde and brunette, the intelligent and rather languid expression of the former, the fire and animation of the fair Syranè, with her sparkling eyes and long hair, which often became unloosed in the romping, and fell in masses over her shoulders.

Sometimes Mrs. Evelyn would find the noise too much for her comfort. Zizzi, with ready tact, never permitted her young urchin to trespass on his friend's kindness; and instantly, when she perceived that her hostess wished for quiet, she would seize the young Bacchus and bear him off in triumph to the upper regions.

When he slept in the middle of the day, she used to sing and play, and Mrs. Evelyn, who was herself no mean performer, would sit enrapt. Confined as she was to the house, she found in their guest a most agreeable companion; and when Lilla and her husband came in to spend an evening, she, too, caught the infection, and ever returned home singing the praises of the young Greek.

Evelyn thought it incumbent on him to write to Mr. Howard on the subject of his *protégée*. He received a courteous letter in reply, wherein the writer stated that he highly appreciated Mr. Evelyn's humanity, still he felt that the unfortunate young lady had

no claim upon him, but, under existing circumstances, he begged to enclose, as a first and last donation, a cheque for twenty pounds.

"Not much to be expected from this quarter," said Eveleyn, handing the letter to his wife.

"As much as I expected," was the answer; "it will suffice to furnish her wardrobe, and to provide clothes for her child."

What amusement the good Bricklinton folks had at Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn's strange conduct, who had taken a beggar woman out of the streets, dressed her as a lady, and introduced her to their family! There were many versions of the story, although no one seemed to be *au fait* at the literal facts of the case.

It must not be taken for granted, because Zizzi was the recipient of so much kindness, that she was perfectly happy; on the contrary, she spent many hours in the bitterness of secret grief. She was alone in the world; those who should have supported had abandoned her, her own base kindred had betrayed her, she had been driven to the brink of starvation, it might be yet her lot to die in the streets, and under any circumstances she was painfully situated, being entirely dependent on the charity of persons on whom she had no claim. She studiously concealed her sorrow from her host and hostess, who wondered sometimes at her marvellous vivacity.

"Has she not tremendous spirits, Polly?"

"Yes, extraordinary; I cannot understand how she can appear so joyous."

"I suppose," said Eveleyn, "that it is the overflow of a grateful heart. I bless God I was induced to stay an hour later at the mill than I intended that night. By-the-way, on looking over Mr. Howard's letter yesterday, I remarked a postscript, in which he says, 'I have not acquainted my daughter with the subject of your communication ; I think you will agree with me as to the propriety of keeping the fact of the young lady's residence at your house a secret from her.' Perhaps he is right, although I am very much mistaken if Kate Howard would allow any spurious sentiment to prevent her from aiding us in making a satisfactory arrangement for our young friend."

So it was agreed between husband and wife that Miss Howard should not be permitted to see or know anything of Madame Deduci, as the poor creature was formally styled.

April arrived, and found Zizzi still an inmate of the Evelyns' house. More than once she had been asked to drive out with her host and hostess, but nothing could induce her to accept the invitation ; and seeing that it pained her to refuse their proffered attention, they judged it wiser to allow her to follow the bent of her inclinations. During every fine day the fair Syranè spent many hours in the garden alone with her boy ; and once or twice, when she was joined by her hostess, traces of tears were visible on her cheeks. Mrs. Evelyn refrained from questioning her ; it needed no wizard's skill to divine from whence her sorrow proceeded.

One morning, at breakfast, Eveleyn said to his wife, "Do you think you are equal to a drive to Castle Croft to-day, Polly? If Miss Howard won't come to see you, you can visit her."

"I should like it very much," said Mrs. Evelyn. So the carriage was ordered at twelve o'clock. "We shall be out for some time to-day," said the lady of the house to her guest; "but I suppose you will be able to amuse yourself in the garden?"

"Oh, thank you, yes; Edward and I will be very happy," was the reply.

About three o'clock Eveleyn's housemaid opened the front door in answer to a loud double-knock.

"Is Mrs. Evelyn at home?"

"No, miss, master and mistress are both gone to Castle Croft."

"Dear me! how very provoking that I should have missed them; I suppose they must have taken the Beacon road, and I came by Bruton Mere."

"They will be back by four o'clock, miss," said the servant, "and most likely before, as you aren't at home."

Kate looked at her watch (it was she). "I will wait an hour, as I should be sorry not to see them. John!—(to her servant)—bring the phaeton back at four o'clock precisely!"

"Please to walk into the drawing room, miss!"

Kate followed the maid, and taking up a book she chose a comfortable seat, and prepared to await the arrival of her friends.

Zizzi had been out with her boy longer than usual,

and was engaged in putting him to sleep when she heard the double knock at the door, but knowing that the Evelyns were from home, she presumed the person had departed, and therefore did not take her usual precaution to inquire of the servants if any stranger was in the house, because she made it a point to absent herself when visitors called. Indeed, so studiously had she kept out of sight, that, but for the gossip of the servants, her existence would not have been believed by the most credulous of the towns-people, as none of the Evelyns' acquaintance had seen her even for a moment.

Some time had elapsed, little Edward was sleeping soundly, when his mother remembered that a book which she had been reading lay on the drawing-room table; feeling her dependent position, she never allowed the servants to do anything for her that she could accomplish without their assistance, and first kissing her slumbering infant, she quietly descended the stairs to bring up the volume she wanted.

How great was her surprise and astonishment, on opening the door, to see a lady engaged in reading; instantly she drew back, but before she made her escape Kate, disturbed by the noise, lifted her head, and their eyes met. Both ladies gave a sharp cry, for they immediately recognized each other.

Zizzi would have fled, but for Kate's imploring request, "Stay, I beseech you." The whole current of her feeling changed; advancing two or three steps into the room, she folded her arms, and stared her former rival full in the face.

Kate came forward and extended her hand, saying—
“I have unwittingly injured you—I hope you do not bear me any ill will.”

Zizzi was prepared for contumely or scorn, but not for the gentle tones of her who had been as deeply wronged as herself.

“God forgive me, lady,” said she, “that I ever thought harshly of you.”

“I have long wished to see you,” said Kate, “and have made every effort to ascertain your address, in vain ; and now, when I least expected to obtain my wish, we meet.”

“It would have been well if we had never met,” said Zizzi, “or rather if one of us had never been born.”

“Do not say so,” replied Kate—“God reigns ! If we put our trust in him, he will show us the good yet.”

“Happy are you in the possession of such a faith ; my experience has taught me that all the best instincts of my nature have been as fiends to lure me to destruction. Mother of mercy ! in what have I sinned that I should be so punished ?”

“Do not talk so bitterly. Those whom the Father loveth he chasteneth.”

“Spare me ! spare me, lady !” exclaimed Zizzi, excitedly. “I have not found a father either on earth or in heaven. I have drunk of the dregs of sorrow, and am left without hope.”

“Have you no friends here ?”

“Friends ! ah, more than friends, saviours ; they

have preserved me from death—myself and my child from starvation. Oh, yes, they are more than friends.”

“Will you tell me more of your history?”

“Why should I tell you?”

“I do not ask from idle curiosity.”

Zizzi looked her full in the face, as if she would have read Kate’s soul; but the eyes she gazed on did not quiver beneath her glance, or return her own proud look.

“I believe you,” said she, “and yet I ought to hate you. I cursed you once from my heart of hearts.”

“When?”

“When you lay ill in London.”

“Ah, then it was not a dream. I always fancied I saw you at that time, but I believed it was some vagary of my fevered mind.”

“I cursed you,” said Zizzi, “and prayed all the saints to curse you too; but their wrath has fallen on my head. Had neither of us crossed the other’s path, how happy one of us might have been!”

“Do you imagine,” said Kate, “that you only have suffered pain?”

“I suppose not, and yet you look so calm I cannot think you feel much.”

Kate smiled sadly.

“I may be wrong. But oh, you know not the depths of my anguish; what I have endured and suffer daily. Except my benefactors here, I have no friends, and I cannot longer remain with them; but for my child I should have left long ago, I cannot bear

to see him starve. O! my boy! my boy!" she cried, bursting into a passionate fit of weeping.

Kate took her hand and led her to the couch, soothed her with kind words, and at last succeeded in calming her.

"Oh, lady," said Zizzi, "why is it that those who should love me hate me, and those on whom I have no claim should cherish me?"

By degrees Kate induced her to speak of herself, and eventually succeeded in persuading her to tell the story of her life; then she who had not wept when she saw the cup of happiness dashed from her own lips, freely poured forth her tears in sympathy for another's sorrow.

When Eveleyn and his wife returned, they found Kate Howard and Zizzi Deduci seated side by side on the sofa; the latter was concluding a sentence, of which the last words were:—"Through their unexampled kindness I am here."

CHAPTER XV.

SHELTER AT LAST.

FROM MRS. EVELYN TO MISS HOWARD.

“Main Street, Bricklinton,
April 10, 18—.

“MY DEAR MISS HOWARD,

“After you left us on Thursday evening, Zizzi Deduci came to me in my own room, and with tears and earnest expressions of gratitude said that she could no longer remain—to use her own expression—‘dependent on our bounty;’ that her health and strength being re-established, she wished to support herself by her own exertions. I said that I perfectly entered into her feelings, and approved of her resolution, but that for the present she must be content to remain under our roof, until some suitable place could be found for her.

“Hers is a very peculiar case; my husband and myself do not well know what to advise, as she is determined to keep her child with her, and he being the only creature of her blood in whom she can hope to find affection, it is very natural that she should refuse to be separated from him.

"I have studied her character closely during the last two months. She is very warm-hearted—painfully sensitive—keenly alive to kindness, and passionate withal. Her frankness and candour are very engaging—she is above deception, and will prove, I am sure, a sincere and faithful friend. The qualities of her heart entitle her to rank high in the estimation of all who value goodness and honesty of purpose, while her many accomplishments would render her an acquisition as an instructress in languages and music, but, from her excitable temperament, I fear that she would be happy in few places, as she is evidently nervously apprehensive of insult and neglect.

"I would willingly engage her to remain as Emma's governess and my companion, but I think, for many reasons, it would be better if she were removed from Clayshire. I am convinced it is also her wish to leave this county.

"I have now fulfilled my promise to apprise you if our young friend contemplated making any change in her abode. She has no definite plans, poor woman; but Eveleyn and myself will make any exertion to promote her wishes.

"Trusting that we may soon have the pleasure of seeing you in Main Street, I am,

"My dear Miss Howard,

"Yours affectionately,

"MARY EVELYN."

FROM MISS HOWARD TO MRS. EVELYN.

“ Castle Croft, April 12th, 18—.

“ MY DEAR MRS. EVELYN,

“ The country posts are very provoking ; it occupies less time for a letter to reach me from London than from Bricklinton, consequently I only received your welcome note this afternoon. Your description of our young friend perfectly agrees with my own impression of her character and disposition. Indeed, she is so frank and artless, that an ordinary observer might thoroughly understand her temperament in one or two interviews. I do not think it will be so difficult to find a situation for her as you imagine, and I have very great hope that I shall be able, in the course of a few days, to make her an acceptable offer.

“ An elderly widow lady, a cousin of my mother's, a Mrs. La Touche, has long wanted a person of Zizzi Deduci's description ; the only difficulty will be the child, but that I think may be overcome.

“ I intend writing to my relative this evening, and immediately on the receipt of her answer I will acquaint you with the result.

“ I remain, my dear Mrs. Evelyn,

“ Your very sincere friend,

“ CATHERINE HOWARD.”

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

"Castle Croft, April 16th, 18—.

"MY DEAR MRS. EVELYN,

"I have just received Mrs. La Touche's reply to my note, which I enclose for your perusal.

"In haste.

"Your very sincere friend,

"C. H."

FROM MRS. LA TOUCHE TO MISS HOWARD.

"Heather Bank, near Keswick,
April 14th, 18—.

"MY VERY DEAR NIECE,

(The old lady always called Kate niece, and insisted on being addressed as aunt.)

"It always gives me pleasure to see your handwriting, since I am perfectly sure that every line will reflect your gentle spirit, and will inevitably do my heart good. The pleasure I anticipated on breaking the seal was fully realized when I made myself acquainted with the contents. How I pity the poor Greek; from your description—I am already prepared to love her. What a sad story! it would make a beautiful play, which, from the pathos of your letter, I am confident you are capable of writing.

"How my pen is running on! but you know, dear, old people invariably become discursive.

"The child is certainly a drawback, but if its mother is so very fond of it (alas! I never had a child!) I should be very sorry to separate them, and perhaps I

may become attached to the little thing—who knows? I am glad you have been frank with me (pardon, you could not be otherwise); so when the young lady comes (what am I to call her, madam or miss?) I shall not inadvertently open old wounds by random observations or heedless questions. God has been very kind to her in bringing her into such a quiet haven as your friend's house, after such a terrible storm as she has endured. I shall be delighted to assist in restoring her wounded spirit to a healthy condition, and anticipate much pleasure from her society. Tell your young friend that I am becoming more querulous every year, but I will endeavour to be as kind to her as my nature will permit. When may I expect the beauty of Syra?

“Adieu, my dear niece. Write soon, and ever believe that I am

“Your very attached aunt,

“N. I. LA TOUCHE.

“To Miss Howard,
Castle Croft, Clayshire.”

“What a charming old lady,” said Mrs. Evelyn;
“do read her letter,” handing it at the same time to her husband.

FROM MRS. EVELYN TO MISS HOWARD.

“Main Street, 18th April, 18—.

“MY DEAR MISS HOWARD,

“I gave your relative's letter to our young friend. The perusal deeply affected her; indeed, any little manifestation of kindness touches her heart of

hearts. She desires me to say that she has no words to thank you, and feels how feeble all expressions of gratitude are to convey her appreciation of the obligation you have conferred on her. I know you have been actuated in this matter by the highest motives, that the purest benevolence has alone guided you; but were I to write what I think and feel respecting your conduct, you might accuse me of flattery, therefore I will restrain myself.

“Zizzi leaves here on Tuesday next, and my husband will accompany her as far as Kendal; the journey thence to Heather Bank will be a short one. Should you wish to see her before she leaves, pray come over on Saturday or Monday.

“I remain, my dear Miss Howard,

“Your affectionate friend,

“MARY EVELYN.”

The arrival of this letter only caused the recipient one feeling of regret, and that arose from her inability to pay for Zizzi's outfit and travelling expenses. As we have before seen, she had launched out in so many charitable enterprises, that her exchequer was nearly emptied, and she had endeavoured to replenish her store by the proceeds of her own industry, the result of which had been the receipt of ten pounds. This sum she had hoped would have formed the nucleus of a larger amount, which she destined for a particular purpose, but now she felt it could not be better applied than in the service of her unhappy friend.

FROM MISS HOWARD TO MRS. EVELYN.

“MY DEAR MRS. EVELYN,

“I truly rejoice that a merciful Providence has opened a door through which our poor friend may pass, and find rest and peace. My relative, Mrs. La Touche, is a most kind-hearted, benevolent person, and I have no doubt it will afford her the greatest pleasure to render her companion happy and comfortable. I cannot imagine any place so suitable, both as regards the locality and the mistress of the house. In the beautiful scenery, the fresh mountain air, the repose from all excitement, Zizzi Deduci will gain strength and health; and from the gentle, religious tone that pervades my aunt’s mind, she will receive many lessons inculcating a knowledge of the highest truth. I devoutly trust that the years she has yet to live may have more sunshine in store for her than those through which she has already passed.

“And now I must request your attention in a matter personal to myself, that I have much at heart. It naturally devolves on me to bear the expenses of Zizzi’s outfit. I cannot go to my father for money, and my quarterly allowance is not yet due, therefore all that I can afford at present is ten pounds, which I enclose, but I shall esteem it a particular favour to be permitted to pay the remainder of whatever sum Mr. Evelyn advances for this purpose.

“Many thanks for your kind invitation; I hope to

avail myself of it on Monday. With kind regards to Zizzi and Mr. Evelyn,

“I am your very sincere friend,

“C. HOWARD.”

This letter was received on Saturday evening, so there was no time for a reply.

“I wonder,” said Zizzi at breakfast on Monday morning, “at what hour will Miss Howard come?”

“Early, I hope,” said Mrs. Evelyn.

At twelve o’clock Kate drove up to the door in her pony carriage.

“This is, indeed, kind,” said the lady of the house, as she met her visitor on the steps; “now we shall have a nice long day together.”

“I fear not,” replied Kate; “my father has some friends coming to dine with him at seven this evening, and he has requested me to be present, so I started as soon after breakfast as possible. But how are you to-day?” Seeing Zizzi in the background, she extended her hand, saying, with a smile, “and you also?”

“Quite well,” replied both ladies.

She had scarcely entered the dining room when the latter came up to her with swimming eyes.

“Oh, Miss Howard,” she said, “how can I thank you?”

“By always considering me your friend;” and seeing she was about to say something more, she laid her finger on her lips. “Hush,” said she, “let us speak of the future.”

"So you have determined to leave to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"I think you will like Mrs. La Touche, she is one of the kindest-hearted persons; but I must tell you she is occasionally irritable; however, if you will only bear with her for five minutes, she will be the first person to see her error and confess her weakness: besides this peculiarity, I know of none other; and although she pretends to dislike children, in her heart of hearts she loves them. I am sure you will be happy under her roof, but you must take care that she does not spoil your boy."

"I should not be at all surprised if his mother accomplishes that end," said Mrs. Evelyn.

"Oh, no!" said Zizzi, smiling, "you forget that I am of the nation which the Spartan mothers adorned, and am quite indoctrinated with their disciplinary rules."

"We shall see," rejoined her two friends in a breath.

"I must look if my child is sleeping," said Zizzi; "should he wake, with the servant only in the room, he will cry."

Kate and Mrs. Evelyn were thus left alone.

"What a melancholy fate is hers, poor woman," said the former; "I often wonder how persons who have suffered like herself can bear the light of the sun; not from a feeling of shame, but from its contrast with their own dark fate?"

"I suppose," said Mrs. Evelyn, "that they live in obedience to some natural instinct; the animal is strong in them, mere living becomes a pleasure, the gratifica-

tion of their hunger, the protection of their bodies from the cold, are the sole ends of their existence, and if they obtain these they are satisfied. I have read, somewhere, that poverty is the disease of civilisation ; and how terrible are its effects ! how many fearful deeds, how many atrocious crimes, are traceable to this source ! I do not wonder that men, when thinking on this subject, have devised bold schemes of socialism, not that any will ever prove effective ; but the effort is an indication of the natural tendency in the mind to love order, and to substitute system for chaos."

"Poverty," said Kate, "and all its train of evils, would not seem so extraordinary to me, if I saw superior virtue among the poor ; but I am bound to confess that human nature is equally as selfish, intolerant, and vicious in the cottage as in the mansion, while, at the same time, it does not possess the polish of education which softens the manners of the upper classes and renders them bearable. But what is more astonishing still, poor, and ignorant, and debased as so many thousands are, they nevertheless cling as closely to their worldly possessions as those who roll in wealth. All are equally fond of life ; all are equally loth to die ; all come equally short of grasping the idea of the glorious reality of a future life, which, to the poor especially, one might imagine, would be an attractive thought. Not so ! I have remarked rich people wrapped up in their wealth ; I have seen old women entirely engrossed in the fate of a brood of chickens. Twenty thousand pounds or five shillings, respectively

representing the property of two individuals, are sufficient to shut out heaven and hell from the practical consideration of either. Of course there are exceptions in all classes, but when I remember how many temptations the lower order are preserved from, I find that they do not exhibit a preponderance of virtue."

"Do you not find greater faith in them, which is reckoned such a virtue?" said Mrs. Evelyn.

"Yes," said Kate, "it is a noticeable fact; but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that their ignorance preserves them from the clouds of doubt and questionings which all experience who explore the field of truth. The human mind is like a creeping plant, it must twine round some belief, and it is generally that which first offers its support, whether it be Buddhism, Islamism, or Christianity. The creed of the unlettered masses is more the result of accident than conviction."

"I admire your candour and justice, Miss Howard. It is so much the fashion to cry up the virtues of the poor and hold up the failings of the richer class, that it rejoices me to hear one who is the friend of the former express the sentiments you have uttered. For my part, I have long since given up the idea of rural innocence as a dream. Men and women are actively wicked in pretty much the same proportion everywhere. You do not see vice arrayed in precisely the same colours in the city and in the country, but that proclivity to evil, which is one of the many proofs of the original unity of man, manifests itself wherever his abode is found. Do you never feel that the labours of the missionary

and the philanthropist are the most unsatisfactory in their results, as far as any perceptible benefit has accrued therefrom to mankind?"

"Ah, Mrs. Evelyn," said Kate, "you judge by the external evidence. Until the great books are opened no one can measure the good that has been effected by the labourers in Christ's vineyard. I can readily understand how even the greatest hearts might fail at times, when they pause in their work and listen to the roar of the torrent of sin as it rolls over the earth and sweeps onward into the eternal ages. But when we remember that 'there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth,' surely the hope of rescuing one soul from the burning is sufficient to stimulate our noblest energies. There is much that is discouraging, there are moments when one might despair of doing good, but all these gloomy thoughts fade before the brightness of the promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Think of this companionship with God, begun here and continued through eternity."

Mrs. Evelyn was silent.

Kate continued—"I know full well that there are hours when the stoutest hearts fear, when a thick cloud seems to interpose between the soul and the Deity, when the cold shadow of fear broods upon the heart, and an awful sense of loneliness is experienced; but there are other times when the spirit soars above this material world, when it ascends to a height from which a far-off view of Paradise is gained, and all the things of earth sink into insignificance. Have you not stood

upon some beetling cliff, against the base of which the surges of the Atlantic were breaking, and wondered how any bark could live amid those giant waves? Lift up your eyes, and as your vision ranges over the sea smaller and smaller grow the billows in your sight, until at the horizon's edge a smooth, unbroken line alone is visible. So let the soul look forward—here the surges threaten instantaneous death; beyond, where the sky and waters meet, their mightiest efforts cannot be discerned; their strength, their tyranny, and power are lost in immensity."

"Yes," said Mrs. Evelyn, "but how many there are who never reach that eminence, whose death-shriek is hushed in the roar of the breakers at your feet!"

Kate looked up and saw Eveleyn standing by her side, his arms folded, listening to their conversation.

"Do not let me interrupt you," he said.

"Good morning, Mr. Evelyn," said Kate; "I am an early visitor."

"And always welcome," replied the former.

"Thank you. Perhaps we may not have another opportunity to-day, therefore I hope you will pardon me if I refer to the subject of my last letter."

"Certainly," said Eveleyn, "but allow me to tell you that Mr. Howard, on my first application, sent me a cheque for twenty pounds."

"Oh! how kind of him," exclaimed his daughter.

"Therefore," resumed Eveleyn, "your apprehensions on the financial question may be set at rest. Nothing more is required than my wife can easily spare from her

own wardrobe, besides what has been already purchased with your own and Mr. Howard's donation."

Luncheon was now announced, and the trio adjourned to the drawing-room, where they were shortly joined by Zizzi, and the conversation turned on general subjects.

After they rose from the table Kate asked permission to speak a few words to her young friend.

"Will you remain in this room?" said Mrs. Evelyn; "or, if you prefer it, the library is at your service."

"Thank you," said Kate, "we will accept your offer," and accordingly they left the room.

"There," said Zizzi, pointing to the large arm-chair by the fire-place—"there I first sat when I entered this house; there the first kind words that I had heard for many months sounded like music in my ear; there, after an age of misery and anguish, I first learnt that human hearts were not all stone, and that God was not all terrible and full of wrath."

"Do you not in all this," said Kate, "recognise other love also—the love of God? Has not the past taught you then, when you might have imagined yourself most deserted, that help was even then nigh at hand, as on that terrible evening when the large and tender heart of our friend pitied you, and his benevolence saved you? I do not wish to recur to these painful scenes, to open up old wounds, but to give force to my earnest wish, my fervent prayer, that you may ever remember, should darkness and sorrow come again upon you, that God is a very present help in time of trouble. Promise me you will not forget this."

"I promise you."

"We are bound together," resumed Kate, "by a very strong and powerful tie—the misdeeds of one whom we have both loved, of whom we have both been the victim, though you have been the greater sufferer of the two."

"Don't speak harshly of him, Miss Howard—my hatred has passed away."

"Is this really so?"

"Yes! Is he not the father of my child?"

"Ah, I had forgotten that. We will speak of him no more. May God forgive him, as I do. Zizzi, when I think of all you have endured, and what I have been spared, my heart bleeds for you, and I feel that you are bound to me in bonds closer than a sister's, and as such a friend I hope you will ever consider me. This was my object in seeing you alone, to tell you that I trust you will look on me as one on whom you have a claim; therefore, should ever any difficulty or trouble overtake you, communicate instantly with me, and whatever assistance I can bestow shall be freely yours. Yet one more request. You are a member of the Romish Church. I am not going to dispute about forms or doctrines now, but it is the custom of your priesthood to deny you access to the fountain of revealed truth. Will you accept, as a token of my love, a copy of the Holy Scriptures, and freely promise me to read a portion of them daily?"

"I will," said Zizzi, decisively.

"May God bless them to you, and give you a right understanding of the truths they teach! I have

one thing yet to ask. Will you let me see your child?"

Zizzi moved to the door, and both ascended the stairs together to the room where the infant lay sleeping; seeing them enter, the servant who was watching left the apartment.

Kate and the mother approached the bed, where, nestled in the snow-white clothes, the child slept soundly, its round chubby face and dimpled cheek the picture of infantile beauty.

Kate bent over. Why did she look so earnestly? Was it because she saw the father in his son, or was she attempting to forecast the destiny of the babe?

"Is he not lovely?" said the mother.

"Yes," whispered Kate, her eyes welling with tears.

"Picture him starved to death," said Zizzi, hoarsely.

Kate turned, Zizzi flung her arms round her neck, and they mingled their tears together.

"May the blessing of the fatherless and the widow rest upon you, for I am indeed a widow, and my child has no father," mourned the young mother.

"Nay," said Kate, "you have a husband, and your child a father, in God."

"Ma!" said the infant, opening his eyes and smiling.

"My king," cried the mother, taking him up. "Will you kiss the dear lady?" The little boy put his face forward, and Kate Howard affectionately kissed him. She could not trust herself to say more than "Good-bye," and, pressing Zizzi's hand, she left the room.

That evening Kate presided at her father's dinner

table, and none of the guests imagined that beneath that composed and almost grave exterior such intense feeling slumbered. Two years ago she could not have believed it of herself; but as the love of God ripens in the heart, love to man and sympathy for all who mourn grow deeper also. "The Divine in man is enshrined in the affections."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEASIDE.

IN accordance with the proposed arrangement Evelyn, with Zizzi and her child, set out on Tuesday morning for Kendal, and the next day the latter arrived safely at their new home.

FROM ZIZZI DEDUCI TO MRS. EVELYN.

“MY KIND FRIEND,

“I have been at Heather Bank only one day, and already I feel at home.

“Mrs. La Touche is like a mother to me, and my little Edward smiles when she approaches him.

“My heart is overflowing with gratitude to you and your estimable husband, my dearest friends, whom God gave me in the hour of my sorest need. May the richest blessings in his treasury be poured on you!

“I intend to write to Miss Howard by this post, so I must now conclude, with deepest thanks to Mr. Evelyn and yourself.

“I am, your faithful and grateful

“Z. DEDUCI.

“Heather Bank,

“April 25th, 18—.”

"I sincerely trust," said Mrs. Evelyn, "she may be happy."

"I think," said her husband, "the chances are in her favour now, and, wrapped up as she is in her child, she finds in him an object worth living for."

"How nobly Miss Howard has come forward," said Mrs. Evelyn. "It does my heart good to see young ladies rise superior to petty pruderies and morbid sentiment; but she has done more, she has forgotten her own wrongs to assist in raising up the victim of him who has so deeply injured her. Not one woman in a thousand would have considered herself called upon to render aid under the circumstances, when, by doing so, she would be opening her own wounds afresh, and recalling to the public mind the memory of scenes that she must wish to be forgotten."

"She is truly a noble creature," said Evelyn; and changing the subject, "You do not seem very strong to-day, Polly, would you not like a drive, it is very mild?"

May rolled away, June commenced, the dog-days were at hand, Bricklington became hot, stifling, and intolerable—even the wind seemed too lazy to blow, and the dust too idle to move. The shop-keepers melted behind their counters, the hams frizzled in the windows, the very iced cakes looked hot, and every person who had ten days and ten pounds to spare rushed off into the country, or to sit down in the "sad sea waves."

"Where shall we go to, Evelyn?" said his wife; "east, west, north, or south; Harrowgate, Scarborough, Torquay, the Rhine, Switzerland, where?"

"Wherever you like."

"Do you know Torquay?"

"No."

"I spent some weeks there years ago, and should like to see the place again."

"So it shall be then," said Eveleyn, and in less than a week they found themselves in the Italy of England, where the myrtle, the citron, and the yucca flourish, where the soft south-west wind blows over the sea month after month, and the balmy air appears to be imbued with the spirit of health, which to breathe is to live.

One moonlight evening they were walking on the strand, watching the tide come in. The town was very full, and groups of visitors passed and repassed every minute.

"I am sure, Eveleyn," said his wife, "I know the figure of that lady who has just passed us, let us watch her when she turns; if it is not Kate Howard, it is at least very like her."

"Kate Howard, Polly! I think you must be mistaken."

"Well, we shall see."

"I declare you are right," said Eveleyn, as the party turned, consisting of an elderly gentleman and two ladies.

Kate instantly recognised them, and coming forward exclaimed—"Mrs. Evelyn! this is an unexpected pleasure. How long have you been here?"

"More than a week; and where has Miss Howard dropped from?" said Eveleyn.

"From Newton Abbot, where I have been spending a few days with an old school-fellow, who met me in London last week, and was kind enough to insist that I should see some of the beauties of Devonshire; so we have been driving about the country in every direction, and this evening it was resolved that we should pay Torquay a visit."

"Is it not lovely?" said Mrs. Evelyn; "nature seems almost to have exhausted herself in bringing together so much beauty. Do you stay long in the country?"

"No, I leave next week."

"I hope not; let me persuade you to come over to us for a week or two."

"Impossible, my dear Mrs. Evelyn, thank you. Papa is quite alone, and every other post brings me a request to come home as soon as I can."

"How provoking! Eveleyn has engaged a sail-boat for the period of our stay, and I am sure you would enjoy our aquatic excursions."

"Yes," said Kate, "I am sure I should."

"In that case," said Mrs. Evelyn, "I will not hear of an entire refusal; you must come over to us for a few days."

Kate hesitated.

"Say, yes," said her friend.

"Yes," replied Kate, "I will, and you shall hear from me the day before. Good-bye, my friends are waiting for me."

"Good-bye."

Eveleyn lifted his hat, and they separated.

Probably, if Mrs. Aylmer had known of a little love passage in the Green Park, nearly three years before, she might have been less urgent for Miss Howard's society.

In due time the promised note arrived, stating that the writer had only two days at her disposal, but those she would be delighted to spend at Torquay.

"I shall want the boat to-morrow morning at eleven," said Eveleyn to the owner and sailing-master of the "Pride of Torquay," a little half-decked sailing craft which he had hired for a month.

"There is a charming breeze this morning, Miss Howard," said Eveleyn to that young lady, who had arrived the night before.

"I am glad of it; the harder it blows the better pleased am I," said Kate. "They used to call me the Stormy Petrel when I was staying at Cowes some years ago. Whenever it blew a gale of wind I always begged to be taken on the water."

Before noon the trio had embarked on board the "Pride," manned by the owner, (or, as he was designated, Captain Venning), and Eveleyn, the latter at the helm. With a south-west wind blowing fresh, they beat out of the bay, and then ran away for Teignmouth.

The blue waves, crested with foam, danced merrily in the sunshine, and the little craft heeled over gracefully, carrying, as the sailors say, "a bone in her mouth," or, as landsmen would express it, driving the water before her in a foaming wave.

"The Pride" was not built on the lines of "The America," and was designed more for comfort and accommodation than speed.

"Shall we land, Polly?" said Eveleyn, as they arrived at their port of destination.

"What does Miss Howard say?" replied the lady.

"Do not take me into account."

"Some one must decide, I suppose," said Mrs. Eveleyn.

"Then we will land."

"Down with your helm, sir," said Captain Venning, at the same time letting the head-sheets go. The little craft rounded to, the grapnel was thrown over, and the "Pride" brought to a standstill.

The lunch had to be consumed, the town visited, and when the ebb was yet young they started to return.

"You're a lucky man, sir," said the Captain.

"Why so?" asked Eveleyn.

"You carries the wind with you whichever way you goes."

"Yes, I see," said Kate, "the wind has changed."

"It's all out at nor-west now," said the Captain.

"Please lend me a hand, sir, with the slack of this painter."

Eveleyn jumped forward and coiled away the wet rope, skilfully succeeding in wetting himself as much as possible.

"Hard a starboard, sir; slack off your main-sheet," said the Captain.

Slowly the boat came round with the light breeze; the fore-sail filled, the jib shook.

"Let draw," said Eveleyn, who had picked up a few nautical terms.

The jib and fore-sheets were secured, the passengers made themselves comfortable, and away sped the "Pride of Torquay."

Dark clouds were now gathering to windward. The steady breeze died away, and the wind came down in tiny gusts, or cats' paws. For a moment or two the boat would rush along, heeling over till the gunwale was level with the water, then a momentary calm would succeed, during which the "Pride" lay almost motionless.

"I hates this puffy wind," said the Captain; "it's allus like this ven it blows from the norard," and loosing the halyards he took in the gaff top-sail. "Take the main-sheet in your hand, sir, with just a half turn round the pin."

Eveleyn did as he was requested.

As they got out from the land the wind became steadier, though it blew fresher.

"Just shake her up in the wind, sir, while I lower the main-sail a foot, we'll take in a reef, Mister Evelyn. I allas likes to be careful with ladies aboard."

"You don't mean to lower the fore-sail, do you?" said Eveleyn.

"Yes, sir," said the Captain, who had commenced his preparations, "she's too much head-sail on now that she's a reef in the main-sail, and you'll find her steer better.

Having taken these precautions, Venning seemed

more comfortable, and sitting on the half-deck, on the weather side, he kept his eyes to windward, opened his tobacco box, bit off an inch of the twist, and tucked it into his cheek with an air of great satisfaction.

The wind had become very cold, and rain was evidently impending. Wrapped up in their shawls, the ladies sat on the weather side, both of them wishing themselves at Torquay.

"Our landing at Teignmouth was quite a mistake, Eveleyn."

"Yes, dear; but the gift of prescience being denied us, we must now take the consequences of the imperfection of our faculties."

"I quite enjoy it," said Kate, "only I wish it were a little warmer."

"Haven't you a spare sail in the cuddy, Venning?"

"Yes, sir, two jibs and a gaff top-sail."

"Bring them out for the ladies to throw over their knees."

"A very good thought, Eveleyn," said his wife, as Kate and herself adopted his suggestion.

The clouds came over the land still darker; there was no swell on, but the wind sweeping down in gusts made broad bands of ruffled water like path-ways across the sea, and rendered sailing in an open boat a ticklish undertaking.

Venning saw that Eveleyn was a raw hand, and not quite up to an emergency, so, coming aft, he said—"I ax your pardon, sir, but I think you'd better give me the helm."

"Is there any danger?" asked Mrs. Evelyn.

"None at present, mam; but once we're round the point we shall have the wind dead against us, and it's very squally."

"What of that?" said Eveleyn.

"You might find it awkward by and by, sir."

"Ladies," said Eveleyn, "are you afraid to trust me? I think I can manage the boat."

"No," replied Kate and his wife.

"Very well then, Venning, I'll keep the helm, only you tell me what to do."

"As you please, sir," said the captain, loosing the tack of the main-sail, and seeing it was all clear for running up.

Whew! whew! the rain came sweeping down, hissing in the water as it fell.

"Can't you ladies get into the cuddy?" said Eveleyn.

Both of them looked at the uninviting little place beneath the half-deck, about as large as a dog kennel, where the captain stowed away spare sails, fishing-tackle, bait, &c.

They shook their heads in reply. "Oh, never mind," said Kate, "we shall soon be at home; see, we are opening the town now."

They had rounded the head into the bay, the little boat staggering on under as much canvas as she could bear, sending the spray in showers over her.

"Isn't she going sweetly?" said the captain, rubbing his brown palm over his canvas-clad thigh. "My eyes, isn't she walking through it like smoke and oakum!"

He had scarcely delivered this eulogium when a squall, more severe than any they had yet experienced, struck the boat suddenly, throwing her on her side, dashing both ladies to leeward and nearly overboard.

"Down with the helm and let go the main-sheet," roared the captain, at the same time letting the jib-sheet fly, and hauling up the tack of the main-sail.

A foot of blue water rushed in over the gunwale. "She's gone," thought the captain. The little craft trembled from head to stern as if with fear, but she righted as quickly as she went over.

"Keep way on her, sir," screamed the captain.

Eveleyn did not understand the order (which was to reverse the helm and haul in the main-sheet), so with the sails all shivering he ran her up into the wind's eye and the boat missed stays; fortunately, no second gust followed. Venning hauled the jib to windward, the "Pride" paid off, and was once more under command, with a couple of tons of water on board.

Bailing was now the order of the day. The little pump, too, was also put into requisition, a department which Kate Howard took under her especial care, so that with the united exertions of herself and the captain the greater portion of the water was restored to the sea in ten minutes, and the boat, by her increased liveliness, evinced her gratitude for their attention.

With the tack of the main-sail up, and the main-sheet in his hand ready to let go on the instant, as before (and indeed the helmsman's promptitude alone had preserved them from being capsized), they beat

into the bay, and in less than an hour Eveleyn had the satisfaction of seeing his wife and friend again on terra firma, though drenched through and shivering with cold.

Thus ended Kate Howard's first and last cruize in Torbay.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OUTER AND INNER.

It was late before the little party met at breakfast next morning. Kate Howard looked all the fresher for her excursion; but the drenching had proved rather too much for Mrs. Evelyn, who had passed a feverish night, during which she had coughed a good deal.

"How I wish, my dear Polly," said Eveleyn, "I had not taken you out yesterday; you have caught a wretched cold."

"Oh no, dear, it is only a trifling cough, it will pass off presently." But Mrs. Evelyn, notwithstanding her assumed light-heartedness, felt depressed, and remained in the house till the evening, when the air was so mild and soft she insisted on going out on the strand.

Slowly they walked to and fro, watching the great sun descending in the cloudless sky and casting its rays of purple light upon the bay, where not a breath of wind stirred, and all was motionless except a boat or two moving across the water.

"There," said Mrs. Evelyn, as the last portion of the rim of the great orb sank below the horizon, "our day is done, while those on the other side of the world are waking with the dawn."

"They are thinking of breakfast, and we of supper," said Eveleyn.

"Horrible !" replied his wife ; " I was about to give utterance to a wondrous train of thought, and now you have extinguished me."

"Then there is very little difference between yourself and the sun," said Eveleyn.

"I do not understand you, sir," said his wife, smiling.

"It is this—you are set down on the sand, and the sun is set down in the sea."

"Atrocious !" exclaimed both ladies.

"But look," said Eveleyn, "how bright Venus is to-night ; she casts a line of light across the water like a moon, and all the stars are mirrored in the sea, so that there is a 'heaven above and one below.' I wonder why it is that evening and early morning, moonlight and starlight, impress us with an idea of beauty more forcibly than any other periods of time. Is this sentiment in accordance with that law which causes us to value things more when new, and love them most when we are about to lose them, that sunrise and sunset are always so much admired ? or does it simply depend on the richer colours and more varied tints with which the world is painted at those hours ? If this be so, how strange it is that a preponderance of particular rays should be so much more agreeable to our faculty of taste than other arrangements of colour. But I doubt not that there is some all-pervading law of harmony, which, if rightly understood, would teach us why certain objects have the power to affect our sense of



sight pleasantly and the reverse. In most cases now we can only recognise the fact."

"And if we recognised the law," said Kate, "we should not be happier, or experience a diviner thrill in gazing on the glorious phenomena of nature than we do now, with all our ignorance. For my part, though I appreciate the inestimable value of abstract science, it pleases me best to enjoy the inexpressible wonderment of uninstructed eyes, content to delight in the beautiful. Wherever I perceive it—in the valleys, amid the mountains, by the rivers or the sea-shore, in the sunrise or sunset, in the moon, the stars, the flowers, the song of birds, the rustle of the leaves, the sighing of the summer wind, the laughter of children, in all and every scene where loveliness is discerned—I, too, perceive a divine harmony between all beauty, whether of word, of thought, of life, or in sun or sea, or flower or star, for in all things I perceive the idea of worship manifested; in things audible, pealing ever along the vault of heaven; in things that have no voice, imprinted in their endless perfection by the hand of the great artist, nature. Through all time and all ages this melody flows on, encircling the eternal heaven in a flood of praise, uttered or unexpressed, mingling with the song of Hierarchs, blending with the music of the Seraphim, like the spiritual breathings of the soul. How all this is so I cannot tell you: call it transcendentalism if you like; I only know I feel it, and rather would I trust to these celestial impressions, these direct manifestations of spiritual power, than to

all the logic of all the schools, from the Copts to the Cambridge dons."

"Feel it," she continued, "we all feel it—at least, all do in whom the animal nature is in whole or partial subjection to the spiritual. The poor feel it, the shopman who comes into the country for a holiday feels it. All who think and reflect acknowledge it: it meets us at every turn; by the grey cairn on the upland moor, in the hollow glen where the waterfall sends up its cloud of spray tinted with miniature rainbows. On the mountain or in the peaceful meadows we confess it; on the bosom of the lake, or drifting down with the tide in the moonlight, it steals over us, a calm, mysterious feeling, such as Coleridge experienced when he exclaimed—

'Oh, the one world within us and abroad,
That meets all motion and becomes its soul;
A light in sound, a sound like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought and joyaunce everywhere.'

This all-pervading power in nature, that ever in the silence of contemplation thrills through us, is—'God, felt in all, through all.'"

"How completely the sentiment of veneration permeates your intellectual being, Miss Howard."

"Is that intended as a rebuke, Mr. Evelyn?"

"No! but I would nevertheless observe that reverence, transcending and subordinating every other idea, would, without care, degenerate into superstition. That which is called the pride of reason has so long been inveighed against by a large class of theologians, that

ignorance has been extolled as a virtue, and its possessors esteemed most fortunate of men."

"Pardon me," said Kate, "but I do not see the connection between your observation and what I have been saying."

"I refer not so much to your words as to the inferences therefrom, Miss Howard. What you term spiritual impressions, which would be more correctly designated ecstatic feelings, excite an exaggerated regard for all the aspects of nature and all the mysteries of the inner life, so that a craving sets in for the unknown, the shadowy, the undefinable, the far off, and then the natural desire to localise expressions, to reduce the ideal to the real, comes into operation, and the groves are peopled with nymphs, the streams with naiads, and deities walk the earth unseen. This is what occurs in an ignorant age among an imaginative people. It is very pretty, very poetical and attractive, art seizes hold of it, and the ideas thus generated are perpetuated through all succeeding ages. The tendency of this line of thought in our day is to remove phenomena from a natural to a supernatural realm; it no longer assumes the form of polytheism, the mind could not now rest content with such a solution of the difficulty, but it limits research and restricts inquiry, so that in grasping at the shadow we miss the substance. Yearning for truth we perpetuate error, and exalt the imagination into a deity. You remember that story in the 'Arabian Nights' of Alnaschar, who commenced castle building, and from a seller of porcelain traced his up-

ward career until he obtained the hand of the Vizier's daughter, and then, in his excitement, kicked down the basket of ware which was to have been the foundation of his fortune. Thus it is in leaping at grand conclusions, the intermediate steps are overlooked, and instead of an edifice of truth carefully built up, your method, or rather absence of method, imperils the very foundation of your opinions. There is a divine harmony pervading the universe, as the result of law ; but instead of confounding the lawgiver with the law, I endeavour to trace out the order of things, to find the relation of the parts to the whole, so that where you see the cause I discern the effect ; where you behold the supernatural I perceive the existence of a higher order of the natural, until, by slow steps, I pause at the foot of the Throne of God. You look for signs, portents, providences ; I see stupendous means working to an end, the whole scheme of nature a consecutive plan so vast that in the present state of our knowledge we may well apply the term inconceivable ; but, judging from what we have already accomplished, I cannot help thinking that the human race will yet attain to a much higher degree of mental illumination."

"Ah, my dear husband," said his wife, looking up at his face, her eyes gleaming in the starlight, "yours is a cold, cold world—it has no warmth, no colour ; you exclude emotion, you ignore feeling, your men would be intellectual giants, exact, impassive, frigid. We would people our paradise with angels, for they are not only lovely, but loving. You gaze on the rose, and say

its tints have no real existence ; you inspect the leaf, and determine that in itself it is not green ; you analyse light, and lo, you divide it into seven primal colours ; you examine each ray by itself, and determine that its hue depends on a certain number of vibrations on the optic nerve. Whereas for us the beauty of the flower suffices, nor care we to examine into the laws by which it conveys delight to our senses. We joy in its loveliness, and are satisfied."

"I would ask," said Kate, "where does your philosophy end, Mr. Evelyn?"

"In the emancipation of the mind from the fetters of ignorance and the bondage of superstition," was the reply.

"Say, rather," said Kate, "the apotheosis of the intellect."

"If you mean human intellect, Miss Howard, I join issue with you ; no sophistry can ever blend cause and effect into one. The Deity is an intellectual and moral being ; we, in a lower degree, are of the same nature. True progress is concrete, consisting of moral and intellectual growth mutually supporting and sustaining each other ; to separate one from the other is to institute a divorce between ideas which are in their relation to man inseparable. When we illustrate this aphorism in our lives, then do we most closely assimilate ourselves to our great exemplar."

"The Lord Christ," said Kate, "came not in the pride of intellectual might, but in meekness, gentleness, and lowliness of mind, and chose his Apostles from among the unlettered fishermen of Galilee."

"True," replied Eveleyn, "but Christ was the manifestation of the godhead bodily, and what is our knowledge compared to the knowledge of Him by whom the foundations of the world were laid? Who raised the dead, healed the sick, multiplied the quantity of bread? Who, when a child, astonished the members of the Sanhedrim by his wisdom? Christ had all knowledge, all wisdom, all goodness; he showed the compatibility of one with the other, teaching us, among other lessons, that which the greatest human minds have followed—that knowledge should not puff up the possessor, but rather render him humble in the presence of the greater mysteries yet to be unravelled. Was not Christ's servant, Paul, a man renowned for his attainment, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, learned in the law, a proficient in Grecian literature, who, when he said to the Corinthians that he 'came not with enticing words of man's wisdom,' did not discountenance all intellectual efforts, but came to restore the truth which the subtleties of the Greek philosophy had defiled, which, as he said to the Romans, 'men had known, for God had showed it unto them.' And how could this truth have been apprehended other than intellectually? I do not for a moment intend to affirm that Christ came to teach us that which we call human wisdom; at the same time he does not destroy it, but subordinates it to the wisdom of God (which is the highest wisdom), the less to the greater."

"I agree with you, Mr. Evelyn, that every good and perfect gift is from God, such as the intellect of man;

and if his mental powers are employed in due subordination to the revealed will of his Creator, so does he consecrate his faculties to their highest use. But you set up your own wisdom as the standard of all knowledge, you reject all that oppose your own conceptions of the truth, and make your mind the measure of the universe."

"Miss Howard," said Eveleyn, gravely, "your observation touches on our sorest point—our mental feebleness and comparative ignorance. Still let me ask you in all seriousness, what other standard of right or wrong, of true or false, have we, than that judgment which God has given us?"

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God!"

"Be it so, Miss Howard; that narrows the question, and leaves us one of two alternatives—either truth is a matter of feeling or reason. If the former, there is no certainty; for men actuated by feeling only, have lived and died for error. If the latter, there is a resting place for the mind, for the laws of reason are immutable. That the intellect and the emotions may unite, in many convictions, I can understand; but when the latter is the only guide, we are adrift, without helm or compass, on an unknown sea."

"It is growing very cold, shall we return to the house?" said Mrs. Evelyn.

When they had settled themselves in their sitting-room, Kate renewed the conversation—

"Do you believe, Mr. Evelyn, that intellectual

strength and moral purity are sufficient to render every thoughtful person secure as to his acceptance hereafter—so secure that he may feel himself prepared to meet his God at any time, without a moment's notice—which seems to me the great end of living?"

"I only know," said Eveleyn, "that men, not Christians, have died in perfect peace, and in the full assurance of hope—I mean persons who are not nominally Christians. But I cannot conceive the idea of goodness apart from Christ, who, as God, is omnipotent, and to live in accordance with his law, is to be a Christian in fact; for as he lighteth every man that cometh into the world, all good men know him experimentally."

Kate and Eveleyn continued their conversation for some time, during which Mrs. Evelyn was an attentive listener. A change had come over her lately. Whether it was that an angel had whispered a solemn message to her, or that the happiness she enjoyed in her union with Eveleyn had intensified her emotional life, we cannot tell; probably both influences had been instrumental in contributing to the result, for when the mind is at ease, and the affections rest satisfied in reciprocated love, love to God takes root, and flourishes in every soul that, under these circumstances, reflects even for a moment.

Extremes of feeling draw us nearer to the Deity; a joy-filled heart yearns with gratitude to the Giver. So also in the hour of despondency, when no good thing seems left on earth, do we rise upward on spirit-wings, and find an abundance of peace in the contemplation of an eternity of bliss.

"My dear Eveleyn," said his wife, "how few there are who can live in that purely intellectual atmosphere which you would have us breathe. You ascend to that clear blue empyrean, where the unclouded sun of reason shines *above* the clouds that hover over the heaven of common mortals; but you must remember, that if you have those eagle-eyes which are not blinded by the effulgence of light, others must wear thick veils to shield them from the all-piercing rays; let us rather have those occasional clouds, which, though they bring storm and tempests some days, yet cause the landscape to be flecked with light and shade, and preserve us from monotony, nay more, the very changes that they bring are fraught with health and pleasure.

"You would have men to be superior to forms and ceremonies, to be satisfied with nothing less than the highest generalizations of philosophy applied to religion; you would substitute a neologic creed for the popular faith, and sweep away all that will not come up to your standard of truth. I have no doubt, that were this idea practicable, in the end all religion would be destroyed. Constituted as the mass of mankind are, there must be some kebla to fix the eye, some point to which the attention can be directed, some outward and bodily sign of the inner and spiritual reality.

"See thou, that countest reason ripe,
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type."

"Yes," said Kate, "the workers on earth require a

practical creed, which without great effort they can understand ; and it is one of the most attractive features of unadulterated Christianity, that while the philosopher wonders at its sublimity, the little child rejoices in its simplicity. Hark !” she continued, “the wind is rising, it is sounding along the sea—already the waters have joined in chorus, and in a short time the thundering diapason of the ocean will roll along the shore. Think now, should any mariners be summoned before God ere morning dawns, what grandeur of conception, or refinement of thought, would give them such a comfort in their last hour, as that faith in Christ’s power, which the disciples confessed when they cried, ‘ Lord, save us : we perish ! ’ ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE "SEINE."

KATE HOWARD left in the morning for Clayshire, much to Mrs. Evelyn's regret, who, as she could not be persuaded to go on the water for several days, was much alone, as Eveleyn's love for boating seemed to have been increased by the little misadventure on their return from Teignmouth.

Thoroughly he enjoyed the exhilarating effect of the sea breeze, and never missed a day, if cruising was practicable. When the wind blew fresh, he revelled in the excitement of carrying on till the lee gunwale was often under water; and every sea that came in over the bows and drenched him, contributed to his enjoyment. Seated on the weather quarter, his feet pressed against the opposite side—the helm in one hand, the main sheet in the other—he was always ready for an emergency. He carried fishing lines, and supplied his table with mackerel and gurnet, and became an adept in the manner of deluding the inhabitants of the deep with a bit of red rag.

Calms and light airs had their charm for him also. When the sails flapped against the mast, and the boom seemed undecided on which side it should hang, then

he would resign the direction of the boat to the tide, and give himself up to the indolent delight of day-dreaming. Occasionally his wife accompanied him ; but at all times her strength was not equal to aquatic excursions, and she fancied that the air was too relaxing. Eveleyn smiled when she said so, but he could not laugh her out of her notion ; while she, seeing that he was enjoying himself, endeavoured to appear stronger than she really was, and Eveleyn never suspected her harmless hypocrisy.

“ Would you like to come out seining some night, sir ?” said Venning to him one day.

“ What is seining ?” asked Eveleyn, not quite sure of the meaning of the word, though half suspecting its import.

“ Vy, fishing with a seine net, to be sure, sir.”

“ Nothing would please me better ; when do you start ?”

“ To-morrow evening, sir.”

Accordingly Eveleyn told his wife that he was going out fishing, and would be absent all night.

When the evening came, he walked down to the pier, clad in flannel — and warmly, too, as he had stipulated that he should supply the place of a man, and determined to shrink from no portion of the duty. A basket containing biscuits and cheese, a quart jar of rum for the men, and a pocket pistol charged with brandy for himself, formed the stock of provisions, which were safely stowed away in the bows of the large four-oared boat in which they embarked.

The crew consisted of Venning, a sailor, a piscatory tailor, a ship carpenter, and himself. In the stern sheets was carefully coiled a large net, and a quantity of rope, the hauling lines attached to the end of the seine. Eveleyn seated himself on the pile of cordage, taking possession of the helm, while each of the men shipped an oar, and impelled by their lusty strokes, the boat shot out in the still waters of the bay—now flooded with the purple rays of evening—for the sun was rapidly approaching his western bourne.

“Where d’ye mean to begin?” said the tailor to Venning.

“Just outside Berry Head,” was the reply.

“All right, give way, my bullies!”

“I think we shall have a good night for fishing,” said the tailor; “there seems to be no fire in the water” (thereby meaning the phosphorescent light).

“What advantage is that to us?” said Eveleyn.

“Why, sir, the fish won’t be so shy, ’coz they can’t see so well.”

The little man hung on his oar a minute, and threw up his nose in the air like a spaniel. “There’s herrins passin’,” said he, sniffing the breeze.

“How do you know that?” queried the tyro at the helm.

“I smells ’em,” was the answer.

Eveleyn laughed.

Venning said seriously, “It’s not joking he is, sir—if you was used to fishing, you’d smell ’em y’r self, sir—like a posy in a lady’s han’.”

The night was still, and with the last of the ebb tide the boat made rapid progress; but before they reached the point where their operations were to commence, the shadows of night were stealing over the sea. Approaching the shore, silence was strictly enjoined, the boat was turned stern on, and backed into shallow water, when, taking the end of one of the hauling lines in his hand, the tailor jumped over the side, and gaining the strand, remained stationary.

"Please you to go for'ard, sir, out of the way of the rope," said Venning to Eveleyn.

"No," replied that gentleman, "let me take the after oar, I want to see how you manage the net."

"By all means," said Venning, and the amateur sat down on the thawrt, the sailor going "for'ard."

They pulled out at right angles to the shore, as far as the line would reach, and then turning the boat parallel to the beach, slowly continued their course, Venning throwing the net overboard as they proceeded, which he accomplished by seizing the top and bottom line in either hand; the former studded with corks at short distances, through its whole length floated, and the latter, heavily loaded, sank to the bottom. Great care, therefore, was required, that there should be no turn or twist in the net when it was being set, or the whole operation would be rendered useless.

Having deposited the seine in the water, the boat was again turned at right angles, and the line brought into the shore, so that a parallelogram of water was enclosed, and the whole area within was eventually swept.

All the parties now jumped on the strand, and divided themselves between either rope ; but as the tailor had already pulled in the slack at his end, he did not require more hands than one to assist him.

Eveleyn did not imagine it was quite such hard work as it proved. The net was sixty-five fathoms in length, and in the middle three and a-half deep, getting gradually narrower towards the wings, or ends, at which two poles about four feet long were fastened.

"Pull away, my hearties," said Venning, "I can feel 'em jumpin agin the net!"

The tailor rushed into the water nearly to his waist, and seizing the rope, walked in with it to the shore, and then repeated the operation again and again. Some pulled hand over hand, others put the line over their shoulders, or took a half turn round their waist, and pulled at it. Slowly the net came in, but by degrees it approached the shore.

"Easy at your end!" shouted Venning to the tailor and the carpenter, "and come this way. Hooray, our side! Close up a bit, men." Both parties were now approaching a common centre, the net itself was just within reach, the long line of corks floating on the surface.

"Close up, boys, close up. Easy your end, Bill! (to the tailor). Hooray, our side!" and the end of the net is on shore. Then commenced the most ticklish part of the operation. The tailor and Venning stooped down, and keeping their hands close to the ground, pulled away hand over hand at the leaded, or foot line,

taking care not to raise it, lest the fish should escape beneath ; at the same time the sailor and carpenter, standing up, paid similar attention to the top of the net, where the corks were placed, Eveleyn remaining an eager spectator of the scene. All eyes were now turned to the dark circular patch of water, bounded by the string of floating cork ; sundry splashes were heard, and wavelets seen, as the entrapped inhabitants of the sea darted to and fro, vainly attempting to escape. Some dashed against the hempen wall of their prison, and all sorts of speculations were afloat as to the number and kind of their finny victims.

"Keep your hands down, Bill," said Venning.

"Look out yourself ! don't mind me," replied the tailor.

"Pull away, my hearties ! pull away ! here we have 'em," cried the little man.

"Take my place, sir," said Venning to Eveleyn. The latter complied, and the old boatmen walking into the water behind the net, lifted the rope a foot or two, to prevent it from collapsing, for their task was nearly over, and a couple of score of fish in the next minute were floundering on the sand. Not the least active in securing their prey was Eveleyn ; plunging into the slippery mass, he picked up fish after fish and carried it to the boat : there were skate in abundance, sole, flat-fish, young cod, mullet, &c., and a heap of small fry, that were sent back to their parents. Altogether, it was a successful haul, and the spirits of the party rose in proportion.

"Are all the fish out?" said Venning.

"Ay!" said the tailor.

"No!" said Eveleyn, "there is something in the bottom," where he was groping with his hands; suddenly he started back with a sharp cry of pain. "Confound it! the beast has bitten me."

"Haw! haw!" said the tailor, who had joined him, "you should mind what you're at with a conger eel, they're slippery coves, and bites like cats." Seizing the creature behind the head, he threw it ashore, where a blow or two on the body stiffened it.

"Ugh!" said Eveleyn, looking at his foe, some five feet in length, "I shall know how to treat the rest of your family when I see them;" then turning to the men, "what do you say to a nip, boys?"

"As quick as possible, your honor," said the tailor, laughing at his wit.

"Bring the jar, Venning, and pass it round." A small cup was produced, and the donor requested to taste his present, an act of courtesy he could not refuse.

"Tell you what, sir," said the tailor, as he smacked his lips, "if my mother's milk was anything like that, they must have had hard work in weaning me."

By this time night had set in, and it had become very dark. Heavy masses of cloud had rolled landward, the swell was rising with the flood, and surged upon the sand in heavy breakers, while the wind sighed ominously.

"Come, boys," said Venning, "bear a hand! let's get the net into the boat. If the swell comes on this

way, we shall have to give it up." His orders were speedily obeyed, himself and two others got into the boat. Eveleyn and the tailor pushed it off, and the same routine just described was again enacted, but with a different result as to the fish, for the net encircling a mass of floating wood, rolled and came on shore like an unwieldy rope, so that their labour was not only in vain, but a very troublesome task was entailed on the fishermen, who to clear the net had to turn it, taking care lest, from the weight of weed, and injudicious handling, any fracture might be made in the fabric.

The difficulty was at length overcome, and another allowance of rum revived their spirits.

"It's no use trying any more just here," said Venning, "we'll have a haul further down the bay. Vot d'ye say, Bill?"

"Let's have another nip, and I'm yer man."

"No," rejoined the other, "it's too soon to get drunk. Shall we try a haul further on?"

"Ay!"

"Then you had better jump into the boat, for we shall have a job to pull her through this 'ere swell, and Mr. Evelyn can hold the shore end of the line. If you'll please to walk down the beach a quarter of a mile, we'll come into you with the end, sir."

The boat pulled off into the darkness, one by one she surmounted the crested waves, at last gained the comparative smooth water outside the breakers, and was soon lost to sight. In due time the crew backed her in, gave Eveleyn the rope, which he walked into

the water to his waist to reach, and once more they rowed off from the shore. It was now so dark that Eveleyn could not see his hand when held before his face, the wind moaned dismally, and the sea broke in still higher waves than it had yet done.

He pulled away at the slack of the rope until he was tired ; he stopped and pulled again. "Where are they ?" he thought to himself, "they are much longer than usual." So he pulled at the net for another five minutes, and still nobody came. Sometimes he thought he heard voices, but the sea roared so loud that every other sound was overpowered.

The crew had succeeded in setting their net to their satisfaction, and as they were coming in Venning said, "Somebody must stop in the boat to keep her head to the sea, or she'll be swamped."

"I'll stop, if you like," said the tailor.

"Very well, Bill, you shall," was the reply.

"Then I'll pitch the grapnel overboard at once," said he, seeing they neared the shore. Suiting the action to the word he did so, and the boat coming in stern foremost, was thus easily brought to a stand-still, her head to the swell. The rest of the crew jumped out and commenced dragging in the net.

Bill was no sooner left to himself than he put out an oar aft to steady the boat as she rose to the breakers, but suddenly recollecting the rum jar he sprang forward to secure it ; he had just reached the coveted possession when his charge, broaching broadside to, was caught by a wave and instantly capsized, returning all the spoil to

their native element in company with their friend the tailor, who, though up to his neck, regained his feet and reached the shore, amid the jeers of his friends.

Eveleyn's patience was nearly exhausted, when at last Venning appeared.

"How have you been so long this time?" said he.

"Vy, that son of a ——," replied the captain, "has been and upset the boat."

"And the fish, of course?"

"Are all gone, sir, and the rum, and the clothes, and oars is washin about, you never seed such a thing. Pull away, sir! pull away!" he added, "let's get the net in, and the sooner we're off the better; the wind's getting up, and dead on end."

In much less time than on the former occasions the seine was dragged on shore, and, like everything hastily done, it was done badly, so that not a fish was caught except one or two skate and a few plaice.

"Where's the boat?" said Eveleyn, as he got down to the water's edge.

"Lor bless us," said Venning, flourishing his arm, "I forgot the boat; the tide's rising, and there she is, bottom upwards, riding to her grapnel. Who'll lend a hand to get her in, or else she'll be smashed, and we shall have to walk home?"

"I'm ready," said Eveleyn.

"And so am I," said the sailor.

"Come along then," said Venning, and the three rushed into the water, on through the sea, up to their waists, their arm-pits, and they reached the boat.

"Get hold of her keel and weigh down," said Venning.

Eveleyn, with the others, made the attempt, when a wave, higher than any that had yet swept in, came thundering on, broke over them, and dashed the boat out of their hands as if she were a piece of cork, at the same time her quarter struck Eveleyn in the head and nearly stunned him. For the moment he thought his end had come; he staggered, recovered himself, reeled, then regained his feet and shook the wet hair from his eyes. Jumping together on the bottom of the boat they lifted the outside gunwale a few inches above the surface of the water, so that the next sea washing under it turned her right side uppermost. Venning got hold of the painter, followed it up to his neck until he succeeded in raising the grapnel, when his companions ran the boat aground in an instant, and soon succeeded in bailing her out.

The oars, &c., had meantime been recovered, the net was once more coiled into the stern, the few fish were thrown in, the tailor, the carpenter, and sailor shipped each an oar. Venning and Eveleyn pushed the boat off, one at each quarter, shoving until the water reached their necks, and then scrambled into their places. Each man pulling steadily and with good will, breaker after breaker was passed safely, and though the last one threatened to swamp them, they received little more than a few bucketsful of water, and were soon clear off the shore, not without a general feeling of satisfaction.

"I say, Bill," said Venning, "you're a rum un to look after a boat."

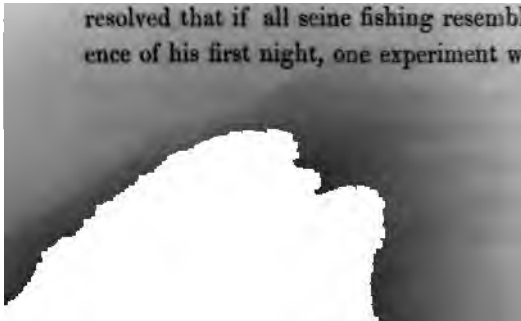
"I was looking after the rum," said the tailor, with very becoming honesty.

"Next time you gets your friends into hot water you vont forget the sperrits, I hope," rejoined the captain.

"Can this be the draining of the net?" asked Eveleyn; "the water is up to my knees."

"No, faith, sir, the boat's leaking," said Venning, "some of us must bale her out."

The only two hats in the company, Eveleyn's and Venning's, were put into requisition, and with short intervals had to be used until they reached home, about four in the morning, drenched through, heartily tired with pulling a leaky boat against a strong wind for four hours, and having scarcely a fish to show for their trouble. Eveleyn had taken his share of the rowing, partly because he had started as a working hand, and partly to keep up circulation. Dividing the remainder of his brandy flask among the men, with teeth chattering and body shivering, he gladly bade them good morning, and sought the comforts of a feather bed, resolved that if all seine fishing resembled the experience of his first night, one experiment would suffice.



CHAPTER XIX.

BEHIND THE VEIL.

SEPTEMBER arrived and found Eveleyn and his wife once more at home, the latter looking better and stronger than she had done for many a day.

If the truth must be told, Eveleyn's holiday did not predispose him to hard work, and business became more irksome than ever; and as his wife enjoyed more of his society in proportion to his indolence, it is to be feared she did not stimulate him to much exertion.

His old passion for field sports returned, and once more the partridge and the hare paid tribute to his sure eye and steady nerves. How enjoyable it was to spend a long day in the stubble and turnip fields, returning to a late dinner and the companionship of a lovely and accomplished woman, whose whole soul was wrapped up in him. To hear Mary play, to listen to her voice, to join in her conversation, was the greatest charm of Eveleyn's life. He now felt that all he had imagined of happiness was but as a dream compared with the reality he enjoyed.

So the month rolled away, and the oak woods rang with his double-barrel and the clear notes of the spaniel

as the gorgeous pheasants came down crashing through the branches, or the little rabbits scampered through the brambles.

Bob Edwards came over to see him and offered to sell him a hunter, a bargain—"As thorough-bred as 'Eclipse;' I'll back him to clear more water than Jack Mytton's one-eyed 'Baronet,' and he carried him over a clean nine yards. Only eighty pounds; dirt cheap, upon my honour. Nobody but you should have him for a hundred."

"My dear Bob," said Eveleyn, "a little more than a year ago I thought I had cried quits with sporting, and now I have been boating the best part of the summer, and have done nothing but shoot for the last two months. There must be an end to this somewhere, so I mean to stay out of the hunting-field; fact is, I can't afford it."

"Nonsense! nonsense, Eveleyn, you are one of the luckiest dogs in the world; you have married the prettiest and richest woman in the county, and faith you ought to make use of the money you have got."

"So I do; but never mind, we will adjourn the discussion till after dinner; there is a bottle or two of eighteen hundred twelve in the cellar, come and crack one with me to-day."

"No, no, old boy, with all due deference, I don't go where the ladies are. Will you buy the horse?"

"A thousand thanks; I cannot afford it."

Before Christmas came in a shadow was creeping over Eveleyn's fire side. His wife became more deli-

cate, her appetite failed her, her strength vanished, and though her cheeks retained their plumpness, she became very thin. So nervous did she feel that her little girl was sent for from school to bear her company ; and though the best medical skill that the metropolis could produce was called into requisition, nothing seemed to do her good. She suffered from little or no pain ; at times she coughed a good deal, but her weakness was very distressing.

Then it was that all the kindly qualities of Eveleyn's heart shone out. Night and day he nursed her, nursed her with the tenderness of a woman ; performed a thousand little acts of kindness, in themselves not much, yet priceless as indications of gentleness, sympathy, and love. He procured flowers for her from Covent Garden ; tempted her appetite with rare fruit ; in a word, he neglected nothing that a warm heart and generous nature could suggest to promote the comfort of his wife.

No one could smooth the invalid's pillow like her husband ; no arm could so tenderly raise her as his ; no smile was so precious or diffused such sweetness as Eveleyn's ; he was to her, her all.

When he moved, her eyes followed him ; if he spoke, she hung upon his words ; she never would acknowledge to any suffering lest it should pain him, and could she have concealed her weakness she would have done so.

Like all sufferers from pulmonary complaints, Mrs. Evelyn varied very much, and after being confined to her bed for three weeks, she returned to the sofa in the drawing-room ; her appetite was restored in a great

degree, so that she was quite convalescent, and Eveleyn believed it was only a cold and debility that she suffered from.

Some sharp frost and heavy snow had set in about the third week in December, but before the end of the month a change took place, and the weather became marvellously mild. Then it was that Doctor Simpson, of London, said to Eveleyn—

“The only chance for your wife is to remove her to a warmer climate at once; she may live through the winter here, but the keen spring winds will prove fatal.”

“You surely don’t think her case is so very desperate?” said Eveleyn, turning pale.

“Yes, sir, I do, and I make it a practice, if possible, never to deceive my patients. My advice to you is—take advantage of the fine weather so unusual at this season of the year, and try Nice till the summer.”

Mrs. Evelyn at first refused, but on Eveleyn urging her to comply with his wishes, she consented, and before a fortnight elapsed they gazed on the waters of the Mediterranean.

The balmy air of the south at first caused a material change for the better in Mrs. Evelyn’s health. She went into the open air almost every day, and a faint bloom, as if it were the sunrise of returning life and power, again painted her cheek.

They were seated one evening together in the window of their drawing room, looking out on the sea. The dolphin-like hues of the dying day had given place to the gloom of night, for the atmosphere was heavy, and

no stars shone through the curtain of haze which was spread beneath the dome of heaven. The waves rolled in on the shore, and rolling broke into a sea of fire, so that a long line of phosphorescent light gleamed mysteriously along the beach and flashed out into the darkness, while the tide-washed rocks appeared to be bathed in flame. Every boat also that moved across the sea, every oar that rose and fell, every drop that splashed into the water was marked with fire. The phenomena lasted for about an hour, until a heavy mist settled down and hid the sea from view.

"How marvellously beautiful," said Eveleyn; "I have often watched the phosphorescent light, but never have seen it so brilliantly displayed as this evening. How the world teems with beauty; wherever you turn your eye there the finger of the Great Artist has traced some wondrous charm. What a paradise is earth!"

"Yes," said his wife, "it is very lovely, but it is not soul-satisfying."

"What, dearest, would you have more?"

"Half the charm of earth," she replied, "consists in its contrasts. If what we call exquisite or perfect scenery was everywhere distributed over the world, our admiration of it would soon cease. Were the earth all mountains, valleys, rocks, and trees, we should sigh for plains and meadows. If the globe consisted entirely of soft pastoral country, verdant plains, stretched out over countless miles, how would the eye long even for a mole-heap, for any eminence, however insignificant, to break the wearisome monotony. Antagonistic forces,

contrasts everywhere, diversities of form and colour, make up the secret of the world's beauty; indeed, moral loveliness would have less apparent charm were it not heightened by a back-ground of evil."

"Perchance that is the necessity of existence, Polly."

"I do not complain, Eveleyn; on the contrary, the world is too attractive as it is, so that the majority are quite content with what it affords, and seek for nothing better. Especially is it rendered dear to us through the ties of affection that knit souls together, so that some lives are one long-drawn thrill of delight."

Eveleyn placed his chair beside his wife's; bending over her, he kissed her tenderly; and she, taking one of his hands in both hers, leaned back with her head against his breast, murmuring, "Bless you, my darling! Have you never felt, Eveleyn, that this world did not suffice for you? That all its pleasures were a mockery—all its ambitions a cheat?"

"No, dearest, not quite as you express it. In moments of despondency, I have thoughtlessly wished myself dead, just as a weary child longs for sleep; but I have never been altogether so dissatisfied with life that I have longed to throw it by in the spirit of rash people who risk everything for a change. I know, sooner or later, that I must pass into another state of being; but the best preparation for higher duties (and I can imagine no state without duties) is to perform well our present work. There are so many problems to be solved, so many discoveries to be made, so many social battles to be won, that I confess I esteem myself happy in

being permitted to have a share in the great stakes at issue. I conceive that to beings in a higher state of existence, there cannot be a much more interesting study than to watch the progress of the human race. I dare say you have looked at a colony of bees at work in a glass hive—you have seen their architectural skill, wondered at their social economy, and pronounced aparian study the most fascinating branch of entomology. Now imagine a race of intellectual beings of a higher order than ourselves, engaged in watching the affairs of the human inhabitants of the globe; with what intense interest would they regard the manner in which we are accomplishing the divine intent? I candidly say, that while I am on earth, I prefer the things of earth—I believe that we are each workers in a grand scheme, of which God is the designer, and that we should not turn our backs on the task he has assigned us, but manfully perform all that we have to do, and thus we shall be making ready for more lofty and more enduring enterprises hereafter.”

“My dear husband, you do not mean to say that you prefer the things of time to the affairs of eternity?”

“What is time, Polly? and what is eternity? Our eternity begins from the first moment of life. We are already entered upon eternal life. There is no greater delusion than to impress on people the unenduring nature of earthly things—that on earth we live up to a certain period of time, when we come upon the borders of a gulf, on the other side of which we begin afresh. On the contrary, we live along the line of life con-

tinuously—hereafter is only an extension of here. Men should be taught more emphatically that their tone of mind, their present moral and mental condition, is literally a foretaste of the future state. The sordid wretch whose soul is centred in his gold, which to lose would be death, will experience that death hereafter, since he cannot take his riches with him. The licentious sinner, whose life has been devoted to wickedness, will experience the ineffable degradation of knowing that all his villainies are detected and abhorred by the denizens of the spirit-world, who endure not the presence of the passion-defiled soul. Heaven and hell are both begun below—they are states, more than places. The former consists in the cultivation of all that purifies the heart, and ennobles the mind; the latter has its embryo existence in satiated desire, in the capacities for the enjoyment of sin destroyed, and remorse begun. That we carry earthly aims, earthly hopes, and earthly joys into the future world, I cannot believe; what I mean by the permanence of terrestrial things, is this :—Earth is a nursery garden, where all states and conditions of moral and intellectual life are planted—here the seeds germinate, put forth their shoots, and attain a degree of perfection; but their ultimate excellence, their culminating glory, is unattainable till they are transplanted into the spirit world, when those who are not deformed by sin, nor injured by neglect, will speedily assume a higher order of beauty; while the bent, distorted, cramped, and unhealthy seedlings will require long ages before the traces of their early life are

eradicated. Man's duty then is to cultivate those affections, and strengthen those faculties, which will for ever distinguish the sons of God, through the endless ages to come."

"It is evident that we both look at this question," said Mrs. Evelyn, "from different stand-points. You, with health, vigour, intellectual strength, and a desire for knowledge, long to unravel all the secrets you may. Earth has realities yet for you, and such as they are, you cordially accept them. I, on the contrary, am rapidly passing away into another country; already I see the hill-tops tinted with the beams of a never-dying day; and looking back on the path I have trod, I wonder that I could have ever been delayed in my journey by the trivial occupations of a worldly life. Behind me I leave sorrows, pains, vexations, doubts, fears—and, oh, my God, innumerable pitfalls, many of which I have escaped as by a miracle, and before me are outspread the ineffable delights of heaven. I feel the bonds of celestial love drawn tighter round me. I catch the far-off echoes of angelic songs, the melody of which now vibrates in my heart, and I am lost in wonder and admiration at the ineffable tenderness and compassion of God, who has brought me to the top of this Pisgah, whence I can now behold a vision of the glories of heaven, that ere long I shall, through Christ, enjoy."

Evelyn was silent, his heart was too full for speech. He had long since known his wife was dying, but he had not realised to himself the idea of her loss. She had never spoken to him as she had done this evening,

although he had remarked of late that an ineffable sweetness possessed her spirit. She was more than ever gentle—so tender, so subdued. All the old nature had passed away, the hallowing influence of eternal love possessed her soul, and manifested itself in every look, in every smile and word. She knew by his silence what was passing in his mind.

“Dear Eveleyn,” she said, “I remarked a short time ago, that I had no longer any satisfaction in the things of earth ; yet you must not suppose that I leave it without regret. There are two strong, two adamantine chains that bind me here, which I could never sever myself. I mean the chains of love that unite me to my child and you. Poor Emma ! when I am gone, her father’s sister must be a mother to her ; I know I leave her with those who will cherish her ; but oh, to part from you, Eveleyn, is a fearful pang. You know not, cannot know, how I love you—I love you for yourself, and because you saved me. I have but one wish ungratified, and that is, not that I should return to life, but that I cannot take you with me. It must not be, and I must leave you. O God, it is very hard to part from that which is dearer than life.”

“My darling,” said Eveleyn, bending down and kissing the lovely face up-turned to his, while his lip quivered, and the large tears rolled down and dropped upon the warm white hands that held his own. The wife was calmer than the husband.

Christ overcomes all passion in believers, and gives them the enjoyment of the higher love that he sheds abroad in their hearts.

"This putting off mortality is very mysterious, Eveleyn. I feel that my bodily powers are daily, hourly failing, and yet I have a fuller sense of life than I have ever known. I well remember when I regarded death with abject terror; whenever the idea arose in my mind I banished it as a child closes its eyes in the dark, lest something horrible might pass before his vision. I used to think of the cold shadow, of the terrible uncertainty, with a coward fear, and now that I stand upon the brink, all terror has passed away, the cloud has vanished, the uncertainty is changed to the full assurance of hope; and how has the change been wrought? Not by a spiritual regeneration through good works, for my days have been short, and for the most part unprofitably spent. Not by the assiduous self-cultivation of some imaginary germ of innate goodness, not by a determined resolution of the mind or effort of spiritual heroism, crying, I will be saved, but through the washing of regeneration in the blood of the Lamb, by pleading his merits, by casting my burden on Him, and He, the good shepherd and bishop of our souls, has taken me into his fold. Eveleyn! my own Eveleyn! if we part to meet again, it can only be through Christ."

"Yes, dearest," replied her husband, in a deep, low tone, "I am a Christian in belief."

Then the soft palms tightened on his own, and a thrill of joy vibrated through the heart of the dying woman.

The wondrous fluctuations in the apparent health of consumptive persons were exemplified in a marked degree in Mrs. Evelyn's case.

For several days she rallied marvellously, and March passed away and left her still an inhabitant of earth.

On the second of April, about ten o'clock in the evening, after partaking of some light refreshment, she begged to be taken into her bedroom. Eveleyn, as he had been accustomed to do for months, lifted her in his arms and tenderly placed her on her bed.

"You won't be long before you return, dear?" said she, as he left the room.

"No, I am only going to bring the Bible."

Coming back with the volume, he laid it on a little table beside the bed.

"Please read the fifteenth chapter of the First Corinthians."

Eveleyn looked up.

"Yes, dear," said his wife, "it forms part of the funeral service, but it will do me more good to listen to it now than to know it will be read at my burial."

In soft and gentle tones Eveleyn read aloud those wondrous words of the inspired penman, so full of hope, and peace, and comfort, and mystery withal.

"Thanks, dear," said his wife, as he concluded, closing her eyes as if to sleep.

"Hark!" said she, starting up and extending her hands as if she saw some object and pointed to it. "Do you not hear them? Ten thousand times ten thousand, yea, thousands of thousands, clad in white robes, are coming hither, bearing the harps of God. What ravishing melody, the whole firmament is jubilant with praise. Oh, joy, exceeding joy! I come, I come!" and saying this she fell back on the pillow.

Eveleyn started up, thinking it was all over. He touched her lips with wine, she opened her eyes and whispered—"Thanks, dear, I want for nothing. Did you not hear them?"

Eveleyn shook his head; he heard the surges on the beach, but no song of angels.

Again his wife closed her eyes, and from her quiet breathing he found that she slept; so, seated by the bed-side, he leaned his arm upon the table, and supporting his head with his hand gazed earnestly at the sleeper's face, while a host of bitter thoughts rushed through his mind, and the cloud of a heavy sorrow brooded over him, filling his heart with heaviness.

About midnight the invalid awoke, and sipped a little lemonade which her husband offered her.

"How refreshed I feel, Eveleyn; have I slept long?"

"No, dear, not quite two hours."

"Will you give me a little eau de cologne?"

Eveleyn poured some of the delicious perfume on his hand and lightly bathed his wife's temples, who smiled her thanks.

"I have been thinking," said the invalid, in a low tone, speaking slowly and with some difficulty, "of that beautiful comparison of the Apostle between the glories of the stars and the different degrees of glory of the saints above. What a clear idea does the simile convey; a child can understand it, and a sage can know no more. When every sinner may, through God's grace, become in heaven so pure, so bright, so glorious a being, how are men so blind as to prefer their petty aims and paltry prizes?"

There was a pause, then she continued—

“Before me flows the dark river, but now illuminated by the Lamp of Life. I set not out alone, I go forward in the company of a countless host. There is no darkness, no fear, no doubt. The messengers of heaven bear me over the stream, and on to the throne of God. All are not strangers that I see. I cannot speak to them yet, I have not learned their language. Oh! now I am able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and I know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

Eveleyn had risen and stood by the bed-side, holding his wife's hand. Her gaze for some time had been upward, she was evidently intently looking at some object he could not see, at last she turned her head on the pillow and whispered—

“I shall go to sleep now; good night, dearest.”

Eveleyn bent forward and tenderly kissed her, then smoothing the pillow and arranging the bed-clothes, he waited until she slept.

Unrolling a mattress and placing it by the bed side, darkening the lamp and drawing the curtains closer, he at length laid down to rest.

The wind came moaning over the sea, the waves rolled heavily on the strand; their dull, booming sound falling on his ear at any other time might have superinduced sleep, but his heart was heavy and his mind excited by strange fancies. He could not overcome the idea that other beings were present than himself and his wife; he peered into the gloom as if he

expected to see some unusual presence ; he closed his eyes, but strange to say, however tight he shut them he could not banish the idea of all-pervading light which rendered his eyelids a mockery.

More than once he got up and stealthily paced the apartment to and fro, satisfying himself before he laid down again that his wife slept. Once he went into the sitting room to look out at the night, but out of doors all was gloom, and the monotonous booming sound still rose from the waters.

He consulted his watch, it was half-past three o'clock, the night seemed interminable, only one thought consoled him—that Mary was sleeping sweetly and knew not of his restlessness.

Again he closed his eyes, still the same spirit light shone, then presently something like a gentle breath of air, so soft* that it was scarcely perceptible, swept over his face, the strange light vanished, and in a moment he fell asleep.

When he awoke he arose, ascertained the hour by his watch, and found it was half-past six. He opened a leaf of the shutters and partially drew back the curtain, and a flood of soft morning light stole into the room and fell over the upper part of the bed where his wife lay. He turned—"She is still slumbering," he said ; he walked to the bedside—"how like a child she sleeps," was the thought that flashed through his mind. He stood watching her ; her chest no longer heaved, her lips were a little apart ; he stooped forward, he placed his hand on her forehead, it was already cold.

CHAPTER XX.

DUTY.

LILLA HILTON and her husband were seated at breakfast on the eighth of April.

"I wonder," said she, "shall we hear from Eveleyn to-day?"

She had scarcely made the observation when the postman's knock was heard, and among other letters that the servant brought in there was one from Italy. It was addressed to J. Hilton, Esq.

"Nice, April 3rd, 18—.

"MY DEAR HILTON,

"It is all over. The angels came in the morning watch, and returned with the spirit of my beloved. The funeral will take place next week. I am not sorry that I am alone. Solitude is best for me now.

"I will return to Bricklinton the third week in the month.

"Love to Lilla.

"Affectionately yours,
E. EVELYN."

On examining his wife's papers he found her will; the contents did not surprise him. Everything she left to her husband, except a locket containing her hair, one or two other souvenirs, which she bequeathed to her daughter, together with some trinkets that once belonged to Colonel Aylmer. The property, exclusive of plate, jewelry, books, articles of vertu, &c., amounted to ten thousand pounds.

On his return to Bricklington he placed the will in the hands of his brother-in-law, and instructed him to obtain the probate as soon as possible.

Hilton could not help remarking to his wife one night: "Your brother is a very strange fellow; he has just become the undisputed possessor of a comfortable fortune, when he returns to the mill, which he always professed to dislike, with as much earnestness and attention as if he had not a shilling on earth. I cannot comprehend him!"

In due time the probate arrived, and Eveleyn was the lawful owner of ten thousand pounds. Hilton was busily engaged at his desk, the day after the arrival of the document, when his brother-in-law entered the office.

"Good morning, Jack."

"How are you to-day, Eveleyn?"

"I want your professional assistance."

"Always at your service, Eveleyn. What can I do for you?"

"Well, I want to make a legal transfer of my late wife's money."

"To whom?"

"Her daughter."

"Her daughter! I don't understand you."

"The explanation is very simple. This sum of money was settled on my wife on her first marriage, by Colonel Aylmer. She was a penniless bride; it, therefore, belongs by right to the Aylmers. I shall hand it over to my step-daughter. So please prepare whatever document is necessary, deed of gift, or whatever it is termed. I am very ignorant in these matters."

"Eveleyn, you are not serious surely?"

"Perfectly; never more so."

"Why, the child has already a very large fortune!"

"She has!"

"You must reconsider the matter. I would be the last person to countenance a dishonourable transaction, but this is mere quixotism."

"My dear Jack, my determination is irrevocably fixed. I never thought for a moment to retain this money. Were I to do so I should be degraded in my own eyes. I should be enjoying an independence which I had neither earned nor inherited by right, and which primarily was never intended for me. It is impossible."

"But consider your position."

"I have, Jack; and am resolved not to eat the bread of idleness."

"At least do me one favour?"

"What is that?"

"Take another week to consider."

"Well, to satisfy you that I am serious in my intention, I will wait a month."

Time, however, made no change in Eveleyn's resolution, and the money, much to the astonishment of the Aylmers, was transferred in trust for his step-daughter.

"I must say," said old Miss Aylmer, Emma's aunt, to her sister, "I now forgive our late sister-in-law for marrying Mr. Evelyn—to have been the wife of two such honourable men as our brother and this young gentleman, seldom falls to the lot of one woman."

Eveleyn, in returning to the paper mill a second time, felt like a slave brought back to bondage. The dull routine from which he had escaped so long, was more hideously monotonous than ever. There were the same suspicious vagabonds bringing rags; the same dirty Irish woman still drove her team of donkeys, harnessed with pieces of rope to the rickety little cart, laden with every imaginable refuse in the form of cotton or hempen manufacture. The same mass of brown or blue pulp oozed over the strainers, and was rolled up, at the other end of the long low room, into miles of paper. The stream glided on as sleepily as ever, and the machinery clattered and roared as in old days. James was still perched on the stool, polished by the destruction of many a garment, or a portion thereof. The endless lines in the ledger and day-book still stared him in the face, where interminable sums were always wanting to be counted up. Do not thousands go through similar duties every day? Yes, gentle reader; but if a young man is to be made into a mill-horse, you must

break him in when a colt. Give him fresh air, country sports, and plenty of money, till he is twenty-one, and he will experience no small difficulty in descending to the details of a petty trade, however heroic his resolutions.

Eveleyn, however, had not toiled in vain. All his father's liabilities had been met. He himself was free from debt—Lilla was comfortably married—George no longer required assistance from his brother's purse—Bob's education was progressing favourably, and in another year he expected to write himself M.R.C.S.

Eveleyn's manner of life was so uniform, that little remains for the chronicler to narrate. Before nine o'clock, he might daily be seen walking down Main Street, and out to the mill, seldom returning again until the evening, when he dined. Except his relations, he entertained no company, and his evenings were chiefly devoted to the study of German and Spanish. His self-imposed retirement was attributed at first to grief or respect; but as a widower's mourning seldom extends over many weeks (at least the outward expression of it in conduct), his continued isolation was a theme for speculation.

Parson Henley had paid a shilling at Doctors' Commons to read Mrs. Evelyn's will; and as the diversion of the property from the purpose of the testator had never transpired, it was assumed that the young widower had become a money-scraper. Speculation, however, as to his motives, ceased after a season in virtue of a law of society—that if an individual wishes to turn her-

mit, he may do so if he pleases. He who desires to forget his friends, is sooner forgotten by them. The Bricklintonians would have gone on very well without Eveleyn.

We must pass over an interval of eighteen months, when we again find him in the office of his brother-in-law, who is speaking—"I think it is a great pity that you do not let me or some other person apply for an extension of the lease; I doubt not, after this lapse of time, that Salmon has cooled down. Only think what an excellent thing you might make of it. You yourself admit that with improved machinery you would realize a much larger profit; and believe me, my dear Eveleyn, that to throw bread and cheese away because of pique, or it may be some natural dislike to the business, is not a proceeding to reflect credit on a man of sense."

"I admit the force of what you say, I have argued the same points myself, and the conclusion I have come to is to let events take their natural course. I am now, in some respects, an independent man—at least, I have no family ties to keep me in Clayshire, as I had a few years ago. George is doing well—Bob can now style himself a professional man—Lilla is under your charge, and I am free. What is there to detain me here? I do not like the trade of a paper-maker; why should I bind myself to it for ever? I am young, have energy, some little ability; greater prizes are to be found elsewhere than any I can hope for here; at any rate, I can but be disappointed again, and I have had so many

rub with fortune, that another throw or two would only seem natural."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Realize my capital, pay all demands, call in my debts, and bid a long adieu to Clayshire. My Barba-does estate has sent me nothing this year, and I am convinced that personal attention and supervision will make it a valuable property. I have already given notice to Ethelfield, that I intend leaving the mill next month, and he has named his appraiser to value the fixtures, &c. James is making out a list of all accounts due, which he will hand you to-morrow—you must get a circular printed, to the effect that all moneys owing to me must be paid into your office. I have sold all my stock in trade, and in a short time I hope to begin the world again, in some more congenial sphere of action."

Jack Hilton knew that it was useless to oppose his brother-in-law when he had made up his mind, so he set to work to further his views without delay. In a few weeks all that Eveleyn had proposed had been accomplished, and it was with a feeling of freshness and relief that he looked forward to renewed exertion in another land. When his plans were thoroughly matured, he wrote to George to run down for a day. Bob was staying with him, and Lilla and her husband being invited to join the party, for the first time since their father's death, the three brothers and their sister met in the old dining-room.

"It is very pleasant to be together again," said Eveleyn, looking round the table.

"Yes!" said they all. Three of them saw one blank. One, the eldest, saw two places vacant, his father's and his wife's. A passing shadow darkened every countenance; but it rested longer on the face of the head of the family, and some moments elapsed before he regained his cheerfulness.

After the tea equipage was removed, they all drew their chairs round the fire, and chatted pleasantly. George was full of the city, and talked like a financial magnate. Bob had wondrous stories to tell, and would have gladly operated on any of the company, to prove his surgical skill; but they required no ocular demonstration of his manipulation that evening, so his assertions were ruled to be proofs. Eveleyn took advantage of the first lull, to ask for their attention for a few minutes.

"More than four years have elapsed," said he, "since from that arm chair our dear father entered his rest." All eyes were turned in one direction; the chair still stood in its accustomed place, none of the children ever occupied it, it was held sacred. "More than four years have passed," said he, "since all of us who are now here were assembled at the reading of our father's will. I told you then I would deal fairly by you all. I am here to-night to give an account of my stewardship. He then took a paper from his pocket, which contained some pages of figures, being an abstract of all receipts and payments up to that day.

After deducting the bad debts, and including those that were considered certain, the net balance remain-

ing was nineteen hundred and eighty-five pounds, besides the Barbadoes property, which in its present condition yielded no revenue, and represented but very little capital.

"I hope," continued Eveleyn, "that when it is considered that the few thousands I once owned independent of my father, have all been absorbed in the common fund, that you will not think my proposal unfair. It is simply this, I shall retain for my sole benefit the Barbadoes estate, where for the future I intend to reside at least for some years, and the personal property I shall divide into four equal portions, retaining one myself, thus each of you will receive four hundred and ninety-six pounds. The whole is thus distributed : good debts, seven hundred ; bills, most of which fall due next month, six hundred ; the rest in cash. As I shall require my share at once, I have paid it in to my credit, at the London and Westminster bank."

"You are too liberal, Eveleyn," said Jack, "a smaller sum will content Lilla and myself."

"I won't take more than two hundred pounds !" said George.

"Hush," said Eveleyn. "The law of primogeniture does not affect personal property. In this distribution of my father's estate, I am only carrying out his intentions. He did not name me his sole executor on account of any greater affection for me, but simply because he knew that at the time he made his will, if his estate had been wound up, nothing would have been left for his children. Now you are well provided

for, independent of this trifling sum of money ; still, that is no reason why I should not carry out the spirit of our father's testament. I will not listen to any generous scruples."

Bob, who had not yet spoken, got up and seized his brother's hand. "Forgive me, Eveleyn," said he, "that I ever doubted you—you are God's noblest work, 'an honest man.'"

Eveleyn returned the grasp. "Now," he continued, "as to the payment of this money to each of you. The balance of cash, and the bills, are placed to my credit in the Bricklinton bank ; there you, Hilton, will pay the debts as you receive them, and I am much mistaken if any of those classed *good* will be unpaid in a month." Eveleyn now took out from his pocket-book three cheques, each for the sum above named, and handed one to Lilla, another to Bob, and to George the third. "Do not present them," said he, "until Hilton has paid into the bank the money he is collecting, and as soon as you obtain the cash, send me each of you your receipt. There is one point more I refer to ; this house, which is held on a sub-lease ; I wish you and your wife, Jack, would live here ; the rent is very low, and it is a far more convenient residence than your own. You can bring in as much of your furniture as you think will be an improvement, and sell the rest. What do you say, Jack ?"

The husband turned to the wife.

"Oh, yes, Eveleyn, dear," said Lilla, "there is no house

I like so well as this anywhere. It is so kind of you, so handsome of you."

"Hush! hush, dear!" cried her brother, "the obligation is on my side, since now I know Bob will have a home, and George also, whenever he has a holiday and wishes to try Clayshire air. And now, Bob, a word to you; I have already spoken to Fellows, and if you like to go into partnership with him, he will sell you a third of his practice for five hundred and fifty pounds, which will thus produce you two hundred a-year. If you approve of the offer, Jack, I know, will lend you the additional sixty pounds, willingly."

"With pleasure," said Hilton.

A long conversation ensued on a variety of details, and it was not till after supper that George asked, "When do you intend to leave this country, Eveleyn?"

"With you, to-morrow evening by the mail train."

"To-morrow!" they all exclaimed.

"Yes, to-morrow," said Eveleyn. "Short leave-takings are always best."

CHAPTER XXI.

OUSTIN PLAINS.

GEORGE went down to Southampton to see his brother off. His books, guns, and other baggage were safely shipped, his berth was taken, the bell rang for the shore people to leave the ship.

“Good-bye, George.”

“Good-bye, Eveleyn,” and the latter had fairly started on his new career.

For the first time in his life, he sailed over the watery hills of the Atlantic, and wondered at the boldness of that mighty man who dared their majesty and power in search of the unknown hemisphere. No unusual incident occurred on the voyage; there were the customary storms, the inevitable sorrows of the sea-sick, the days of fine weather, the various atmospheric phenomena, marvellous sunsets, glorious star-lit nights, mysterious dawns, and so forth.

The passengers were of the usual varied character. There was the man who had made a fortune, and the man who had lost a fortune, and the man in search of a fortune; there were old ladies and young ladies, and no very pretty ladies; there were men who liked whist, and others who liked nothing;

there was the lively man, whose stale jokes were fresh to a new audience; there was the pious man, and the missionary, who went out "to rescue if it might be one brand from the burning," whose salvation probably depended on his safe arrival. There was the practical man, and the speculator; in short, an infinite variety; for a little society of fifty or sixty people, drawn together from different localities, is more or less an epitome of the greater world.

After a prosperous voyage, Eveleyn found himself one fine morning in Carlisle Bay, off Bridgetown, the capital of Barbadoes. Evening, however, arrived before all his goods and chattels were safely landed and brought to the hotel, so he determined to remain in the town that night, and drive to his estate next day.

He had deemed it wiser not to acquaint his steward with his projected visit, as that gentleman's method of performing his duties would be more easily ascertained if he dropped on him suddenly.

Oustin Plain, the name of his estate, or farm as we should call it in England, consisted of about five hundred acres, devoted to the growth of sugar. It had in former days yielded a handsome income, but the land had become impoverished by injudicious cropping, and had also sustained considerable damage in the great storm of 1831, when the buildings were levelled and the growing crops destroyed. For several years it had been under the management of agents, each of whom seemed to outdo the other in spending money and remitting none to the proprietor.

When Eveleyn first saw the compact and naturally fertile tract that called him owner, he had to restrain his exultation by the recollection of the fact that his sugar plantation barely paid the interest of the mortgage debt and expenses.

The house was a long low, building, surrounded on all sides by a green verandah. As he approached it he remarked that some of the windows were entirely out, from others the jalousies hung by one hinge, the roof was in holes, the garden was entrusted to the care of swine and poultry, and so completely had desolation obtained the mastery that Eveleyn groaned over the wreck and ruin he surveyed.

At some distance from the house stood the mill where the canes were crushed, and the other offices; thither he bent his steps. He found that the premises were enclosed by a wall, the gate of which was in good repair, and with no small satisfaction he perceived that these were in better preservation than the residence.

"There seems to be nobody alive here," said Eveleyn to the black who drove him.

"All de people out workin in de fields, saar, I s'pose."

The idea that the place was deserted was dispelled as soon as they reached the yard gate, when the shrill voice of a woman and the angry tones of a man echoed through the little square.

"Massa Edward," said the black, "de debil when him drunk."

Eveleyn made no reply, but descending from the vehicle he opened the gate and hurried noiselessly

across the enclosure in the direction whence the sounds proceeded.

Nearly opposite the gate a building projected a little way in front of the others, and from the wooden blinds and painted door Eveleyn assumed that it was an office, as there was an air of occupation about it which no other part of the premises exhibited.

From this quarter the voices evidently came. The door stood half open, and also the blinds, thus exposing the interior; and although he did not like to play the part of eaves-dropper, the scene within was so unique he could not forbear watching the actors for a moment, himself unseen.

Seated at a table was a large savage-looking man in the prime of life, and but for their villainous expression his features would have been handsome. His auburn hair curled in masses over his head, his eyes were blue, though bloodshot, his mouth was large, though well formed, but his full lips bespoke the sensualist. Before him stood a half-empty bottle of rum, a jug of water, and a tumbler, from which he had been helping himself freely, although it was only eleven o'clock.

This was Mr. Edward Hopeton, Eveleyn's agent and overseer.

In the opposite corner of the room stood a remarkably handsome Mulatto girl, who might have sat as a model Cleopatra. Her hair was drawn back, plaited, and brought round her head in a coronet; her large eyes, dilated with excitement, gleamed like jewels; her dress was a light-coloured cotton, worn very loose, confined by a girdle at the waist.

"I love you, Fanny," said the man.

The girl made no reply.

"It's no use you're saying no to me, Fanny, you shall be mine."

"Never!" said the girl.

"None of your ——— airs to me."

"You are married," replied the girl, "and should be ashamed to speak in this manner to me."

"D—— the old woman!" replied Hopeton; "when she's dead I'll marry you."

"I want to go home," said the girl.

"So you shall, my dear, if you will kiss me."

A look of inexpressible disgust spread over the young girl's face.

"Don't be silly, Fanny," said her tormentor, "twenty girls would jump at the offer I am making you. But I know what's in your mind, you fancy yourself in love with that jackanapes Duverdier; but I'll turn him out of his berth neck and crop if you won't listen to reason. Ah," said he, swallowing a tumbler of rum and water between the pauses—"Ah, you thought I'd be in Bridgetown to-day, and that Master William and you would have a nice time of it in my absence. You are not cunning enough, Fanny. Now be reasonable, you're in my power, there's not a soul at home, you may scream till the rafters come down, but you shan't leave here till you promise to love me."

"Love *you*!" said she; "ha! ha!" curling her lip in scorn.

"Don't exasperate me, Fanny," said Hopeton, rising; "I'm not to be trifled with."

The young woman trembled.

"By — !" said her tormentor, "I never saw you looking so pretty as at this moment ; I must kiss you." He stood up and made a step forward.

"Advance at your peril," said the girl.

"My dear," said he, "don't be silly, I won't hurt you."

With a wild shriek the girl rushed to the door. Hopeton darted forward to intercept her, she eluded his grasp, but striking her foot against the chair from which he had just risen, she stumbled, staggered, and fell into Eveleyn's arms, who was coming to the rescue.

Seeing the stranger, Hopeton uttered a wild yell, and flung the decanter at his head. Eveleyn, adroitly putting out his hand, turned it, so that the missile went spinning into the yard. Half maddened with rage, Hopeton clenched his teeth, and rushed at Eveleyn ; the latter, jumping aside, thrust out his foot and tripped his antagonist, who rolled headlong on the floor. The fall partly quieted him.

"Who the —— are you ?" said he to Eveleyn, as he regained his feet.

"Your master," was the reply.

"My master ! who is he ?"

"Eveleyn Evelyn."

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know you ; didn't expect you, sir."

"I should think not," was the reply. "After the scene I have just witnessed," continued Eveleyn, "I can no longer retain you in my service. I give you

till night to make your arrangements, but you cease to be in my employment from this moment."

Instantly the whole bearing of the man changed from the tone of subserviency which he had begun to assume.

"Mr. Evelyn, indeed," said he; "nothing of the sort—you are some —— impostor! leave the premises at once, or I will set my bulldogs on you!"

Eveleyn whispered to the girl, who still hung trembling on his arm—"Run and call some of the people here."

Instantly she started off like an arrow, much to the chagrin of Hopeton, who could only curse her. That individual now essayed to leave the room, determined in his own mind to put his threat into execution before rescue arrived.

"You only pass here over my body," said Eveleyn; and though the overseer was the larger and more powerful man, yet there was that quiet look of undaunted and indomitable courage in Eveleyn's steady gaze, that made the other afraid to attack him; so, making a feint to reach the door, he sprang aside, vaulted through the window, and before Eveleyn could reach him, turned down a passage terminating at a door, which he opened and fastened after him, thus cutting off pursuit. Finding there was no chance of catching the fugitive, Eveleyn went back to the office to abide the return of his messenger with assistance. At first he thought he would barricade himself in the room, and stand a siege. "No," said he to himself, "I will abide the issue, cost what it may," and looking around for some weapon of defence; nothing, however, presented itself except one of the

light chairs, which he placed beside him. Hist! Yes, it is indeed! 'Tis the excited bark of dogs being unchained. Then all is silent, but for a moment only, when the yard gate is thrown open, and Hopeton, with his two gaunt bulldogs, rushed into the yard.

"The wretch is in earnest, I declare," said Eveleyn. He jumped back into the room, upset the table, and thus formed a breastwork, behind which he entrenched himself.

"At him, Cæsar!—at him, Nep!" said their master.

With their lips drawn up, displaying their glittering teeth, the brutes rushed into the room, and the foremost sprung without hesitation at Eveleyn's throat, who, just as the dog's head rose above the table, brought down the chair with the full sweep of his arm, and laid the beast lifeless. The death of his companion intimidated the survivor, who contented himself with yelping in front of the table.

"Seize him, Nep!" said his master; "at him, good dog!"

"Fiend," said Eveleyn to the overseer; "call off your dog, or you will repent this day's work."

The only reply was, renewed shouts of "Tear him, Nep."

"You coward," said Eveleyn, "come on yourself."

Again the answer was, "Tear him, boy! rip him up, Nep!" This lasted for a few minutes, when Eveleyn became so exasperated, that, springing over the table, he levelled a blow at Hopeton, and knocked him down senseless; his own feet slipping at the same time, he fell

sprawling over his prostrate antagonist. The dog watched his opportunity, and flew at him ; but Eveleyn had the good fortune to seize his canine foe by the throat, and held him at arm's length. In vain he howled, struggled, and tore with his paws at the arm that restrained him—he was fixed as if in a vice. Once, twice, thrice Eveleyn attempted to regain his feet ; but lying on his back with his legs over Hopeton's body, and his heels being thus higher than his head, he found each effort rendered unavailing by the violence of the dog, who writhed and twisted like an eel in his grasp. How much longer his strength would last, he could not tell ; he felt the hot breath of the raging animal on his face, from whose jaws the foam fell in flakes as he gnashed his teeth in fury. His arm grew stiff, he lost all sensation in his fingers, when it suddenly occurred to him to make one effort, and concentrating all his strength, he lifted the dog upwards, hurled him over his head, and before the brute could return to the charge, he regained his feet, and was ready to meet him.

A loud, shrill whistle resounded through the yard ; the dog pricked up his ears—"Nep, Cæsar ! Nep, Cæsar !" cried a female voice, and the mulatto girl rushed into the room, when the beast crept whining to her feet.

A crowd of negroes came floundering in Fanny's train, shouting—"Massa hab come—Massa Ebeleyn, him here ! God sabe Massa Ebeleyn !" and pressed forward to shake his hand.

Eveleyn acknowledged the warm reception with much feeling. Old men and women, who had seen his father

and uncle, crowded round him, screaming—"Him image ob him fader ! Oh, he so like him Uncle Tom ! Berry glad see you, Massa ! Massa Hopton bad man !"

"Thanks, thanks, my good friends, all of you, I am very glad indeed to see you ; but now remove that fellow," pointing to the prostrate overseer. They raised their late master, and pouring two or three buckets of water on him by way of quiet revenge, restored him to consciousness and a sense of wet clothes, every article of his dress being completely saturated. A cart was brought out. Hopeton, under the charge of a couple of negroes, was sent into Bridgeton, where Eveleyn, on his arrival, succeeded in providing him with lodgings at the expense of the public. Thus ended the first day on his Barbadoes estate.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL.

LIKE most confidential servants unexpectedly turned out of their situations. Hopeton had a large balance of wages due to him, and as soon as his term of imprisonment expired, he made a demand for four hundred and thirteen pounds, for arrears of salary and sundry disbursements made by him on account of the estate. Of course, so faithful and astute a person as the ex-overseer, had vouchers corresponding with his charges, and doubtless expected that the upright and liberal Mr. Evelyn would be only too happy to sign a check for the amount; but that gentleman, having had a little experience in business matters, knew that an agent can always show an abundance of documentary evidence in favour of the validity of any claim he may advance. So his cruel reply to the legal gentleman who waited on him on Mr. Hopeton's behalf was, "I have the honour to refer you to Mr. Mildred, my solicitor, in Bridgeton." The result of this arrangement was, that the ex-agent, by the advice of his friend, in consideration of receiving fifty pounds sterling, signed a receipt in full of all demands against Mr. Evelyn Evelyn.

To have put the house at Oustin Plains into thorough repair would have cost a thousand pounds; so he contented himself with making it wind and water-tight, and furnishing one or two rooms comfortably, which cost him two-thirds of his remaining capital; so after paying Hopeton's demands, and deducting the cost of his passage out, he found himself the possessor of little more than one hundred and twenty pounds; but as his living would now cost a mere trifle, he thought he had no cause for anxiety. On examination of the property, he ascertained that on the whole it had been well cultivated, except that manure had been too sparingly used, and the number of labourers disproportionately large. It had evidently been Hopeton's scheme to make as much money out of the estate as was possible in a short time, he taking good care to appropriate all the profits, so that he had ample means to indulge his vicious propensities, and, as it ultimately proved, to enter into business on his own account in Jamaica.

With assiduity and economy, in a few years Eveleyn hoped to wipe out the debt; and with this prospect before him he set about his new duties cheerfully. In William Duverdier, the affianced lover of Fanny, the mulatto girl, he had an able assistant. This young man was employed as a sub-agent, or overlooker of the field work; and when he was made acquainted with the important service his master had rendered him, no words could express his gratitude, but he amply manifested it by years of devotion.

Numerous visitors from Bridgeton and the country

called on Eveleyn, visits of ceremony which he ceremoniously returned; but when they asked him to their houses, he, without exception, declined their hospitality, frankly telling them that he had come to Barbadoes to retrieve his fortune, and must, therefore, postpone the pleasure he looked forward to in the enjoyment of their society. He thus gave up all his days to business, and his evenings to reading, and writing up his diary.

He was obliged to confess to himself, after six months' experience of retirement on a Barbadoes sugar plantation, that the life of a recluse was not the most desirable mode of existence; but having resolved to practise rigid economy for a year, until he had struck his annual balance, and had ascertained his precise income, he manfully fulfilled his determination, not, however, without many inward struggles and longings for change.

Day after day, month after month, rolled away, bringing each its respective work. Planting and harvest, crushing and boiling, went on in undeviating rotation. The scenes of riot and drunken revelry which had marked Hopeton's régime had ceased, and were succeeded by order, method, and a high regard for moral and religious obligations. The labourers were reduced in number, yet as much work was accomplished as formerly, while the men were happier, being kindly treated and regularly paid; so that the fame of Eveleyn as a kind-hearted and considerate master was noised abroad in all the regions round about.

Among his many improvements, not the least impor-

tant was the establishment of a Sunday and bi-weekly evening school for the workmen on his plantation, and as many others as chose to come from the neighbourhood. His pupils numbered fifty, and the average regular attendance was about thirty.

Many a dreary evening did he spend in that old house during his first year in Barbadoes, after the novelty of the scene and life had passed away, when the tropical vegetation grew familiar to his eye, and he became intimately acquainted with all the salient points in the scenery. However retired his life had been in Bricklinton, he had some one to exchange ideas with; but now he often started at the sound of his voice, as the desolate passages and deserted rooms caught up the tones, and repeated them from one to the other.

He used for recreation to recite passages from the poets, to declaim aloud the celebrated bits of Shakespeare, till the old women thought him mad, and queried within themselves whether manna was practising magic, or preaching to himself. Often during storms he sat in the verandah watching the black clouds ascending against the wind, heralded by the artillery of heaven, while the lightning flashed around the edge like a line of skirmishers. Deeper and denser would the masses grow, covering the whole vault of the sky; then the great battle of the elements would commence, raging with exterminating fury. Now here, now there, the flame would flash out amid the peals of thunder—then the whole concave would be lit up in terrific

splendour with yellow, rose colour, or crimson flame, while the hissing bolts coursed each other through the air, tearing huge chasms in the clouds, or, rushing earthwards with blind rage, would rip open some tall tree as if in savage sport. Calm and unconcerned would he sit for hours watching the beauty of the tempest, till his eyes ached with the glare of the electric fluid, and the blacks ran screeching about the house, or hid their heads like ostriches, imagining that the rest of their bodies were secure.

"Massa Eveleyn, do come in!" the old housekeeper would say. "God Almighty tink you laugh at Him ib you sit out dare."

If Eveleyn's manner of life was a puzzle to his servants, it was a riddle to all the neighbours, and to many a Barbadian belle who had seen him riding to and from Bridgeton, or met him walking in the town, and been struck with his appearance. The warm sun had bronzed his face, exercise had strengthened his muscles, and maturity had developed his frame. If, as some assert, a man cannot be a Christian unless he is six feet high, Eveleyn might be considered a candidate for canonization, so admirably did his figure combine height, strength, and elegance.

The sentimental ladies thought that he had been crossed in love, or that there was a dark page in his history. Simply because he had asserted his poverty, few would entirely believe in it; and, as at Bricklington, many called him a screw. The thoughtless said that all pious people were fond of money; for Eveleyn's

efforts to afford moral and religious instruction to his workmen were very generally known, and procured him but little praise.

How in these days did his heart yearn for home ! Seen across the wild surges of the broad Atlantic, Clay-shire seemed a Paradise ; even the old mill was an object of interest, and once or twice in the night he started up, thinking he heard the clatter of the wheels.

Every other mail brought him letters from home. Lilla wrote gossip ; Hilton, business ; George, shop ; and Bob sent love.

Man's life is threefold—he lives in the past, the present, and the future. The roseate hues of a perpetual sunset fall ever on the first, softening the asperities, subduing every harsh line, concealing naked and barren places with a haze of sentimentality. For time even tones down our sorrows and afflictions, and renders us oblivious of the petty vexations that fretted our minds as we passed along, but it brings out in bold relief, in the atmosphere of memory, all our pleasures and delights.

The present is a battle often grievous, often desperate, with victory trembling in the balance, while the future is a very land of promise, where stand the thousand and one winning posts, to reach which we are trying.

Pleasant it is to pause on the high road, occasionally to mark the pathway we have trodden. Well is it in the passing day to do manfully that which we have to perform, but better is it to look beyond ; before



us Alps on Alps arise, up to the summit tend the noblest souls. Look at the crowd straining onward; fewer and fewer are their numbers as they ascend; some have found pleasant valleys, and have been content to stay; others have rolled over precipices and perished, or the avalanche has swept them away, but a noble band are still toiling higher to the topmost peak, which reaching, they take wing and find their rest in heaven.

Though the memories of departed pleasures were sweet to think of, Eveleyn wasted no time in vain regrets; to-day occupied his energies, in to-morrow lay his hopes. At last the year came round, and to his great delight he found, after deducting his personal expenses, he was a gainer of three hundred pounds net, with a prospect of a larger balance to crown the ensuing twelve months.

Before a week elapsed he made two or three calls; among others, he visited the clergyman's family, and found in Mr. Nugent an accomplished and agreeable man. What that gentleman and his family thought of their visitor may be gathered from the following conversation:—

MR. N.—“What a gentlemanly young man is Mr. Evelyn; he really has allowed his light to remain hidden under a bushel; he will make a most charming addition to our circle.”

MRS. N.—“I hear he is poor, my dear—at least, he says so himself.”

MISS CLARA N. (aged twenty, the eldest daughter

and hope of the house, *i. e.* mamma hopes to get Clara married comfortably).—"You ought to hang a steel-yard up in the hall, papa, so that all young gentlemen who visit here might be weighed together with their money, for mamma's standard of virtue is a golden one."

MISS MILDRED N. remarked that she had never seen such eyes, or such a mouth and teeth.

MISS C. N. also observed that she was sure their new acquaintance was a poet, it was written on his forehead.

MRS. N. cried, "Nonsense, Clara, Mr. Evelyn is not to be compared with Mr. Seymour"—(who, be it known, owned the largest estate in Barbadoes).

MR. N. observed, "We must ask him to dinner;" an invitation which was afterwards given, and cordially accepted.

It would fill a much larger history than this is intended to be, if we, as faithful chroniclers, related all the adventures which befel Mr. Evelyn in Barbadoes; how he improved his acquaintance with the Nugents, gained papa's esteem, mamma's regard, and the admiration of the young ladies; how he talked philosophy and theology with the first, obtained much valuable information relating to housekeeping from the second, and laughed and chatted with the last; turned over the leaves of their music, quoted poetry, wrote verses in their albums, and escorted them in many a ramble.

Clara never made a confidante of her sister, but she frequently sighed when they were alone, and Mil-

dred more than once remarked, at the conclusion of one of those interminable conversations which young ladies indulge in after they have said their prayers, and before they attempt to sleep, that Mr. Evelyn was a very extraordinary person—you might get very friendly with him, but nothing more.

Neither can we relate how he extended his visiting circle, made a few enemies, but more friends; how he furnished several rooms in his house, and saw gentlemen at his own table occasionally, taking care, however, to let no debt of hospitality remain unpaid; how, also, he was entreated to become a member of the Assembly, but declined; and lastly, how he was introduced to the Governor, and might perhaps have died a senator.

But Mr. Evelyn felt he was a pilgrim; Barbadoes was a refuge, not a home. Its air was balmy and fragrant, but it lacked the invigorating freshness of the breezes of England. Barbadian society was very agreeable, but he cared not for numerous friends; Barbadian belles were many of them pretty, some even lovely, but his ideal had no exemplar among them. His heart and soul were in the mother country, and as the poor coolie dresses himself in his best apparel, and together with his treasures jumps overboard, expecting to rise up at Pekin in the enjoyment of youth and vigour, so Evelyn thought that after his submersion in a British colony he should ultimately come to the surface in his native land.

A considerable portion of the third year of his exile

had passed away, when the post brought him a letter from Lilla. After the usual greeting and a long description of two little Hiltons who had made their *entrée* into this vale of tears, the writer proceeded to say—

“ You will be very sorry to hear that Mr. Howard, when out hunting about a fortnight ago, sustained a very severe fall, which resulted in his death a few days afterwards. The doctors say he broke three ribs, and the fractured bones caused internal inflammation, under which he speedily sank.

“ Poor Miss Howard, how my heart bleeds for her ! She will have to leave Castle Croft, as the property goes to the child of a distant cousin ; but as her father is known to have insured his life, she will have a very comfortable income ; and I am sure no one deserves it more than she does. Her charity and benevolence have passed into a proverb.

“ And now, my dear Eveleyn, is there no chance of our seeing you before the year is out ? Surely you mean to return some time. Don’t wait till you have grown rich—till your hair becomes grey, and your heart cold—but come amongst us soon again. You will be happier with a competence here than a fortune in the West Indies, where no one can love you as

“ Your ever fondly attached sister,

“ LILLA.”

Eveleyn could not forbear a sigh as he finished the letter.

"Her advice is good," said he. "Why should I toil here, where my heart is not? If everything goes on well, I shall have at the end of the year a thousand pounds in hand, and the estate is worth half as much again as when I came here. Yes, I will return," was the resolution he then formed, though often thought of before.

With a lighter heart than he had known for many a day, he retired for the night, the long passages echoing with a very rude attempt at harmony, in which he indulged, in the excitement of the moment, much to the astonishment of the blacks, who thought, "Massa had been drinkin him's own health."

He had been asleep some hours when he was disturbed by a loud crash. He started up; another followed; then the lightning flashed so furiously in his face that he fancied the electric fluid had entered the room. Peal after peal of thunder roared above his head; the blue bolts darted in zig-zag lines across the sky, and the flashes were so incessant that the country was lit up as if with a conflagration. The wind howled, the rain dashed in torrents, as it can rain only in the tropics, where the elements put forth their strength as if in madness.

"What a fearful night," said the watcher. "Hark! what is that cry? Hark! what can it mean?"

Then a bright light burst forth, unlike the gleam of lightning. Eveleyn sprang out of bed, drew aside the curtains, and saw his out-offices a mass of flame. Hastily throwing on a few clothes, he rushed out to

the scene of the conflagration. He reached the yard gate, heard the cry of the terrified blacks who slept on the premises, and now, escaping from the fire, were half mad with terror. Still the tempest raged—a tree was shivered by his side—he knew no more.

When consciousness returned he found himself lying on his back, on his bed, surrounded by a troop of negroes.

“What is the matter? What has happened?” said he, raising himself on one elbow, and feeling an unaccountable dizzy sensation.

“Oh, God Almighty be praised!” exclaimed the poor servants. “Massa no dead!”

It was with some difficulty that he extracted a narrative of the events of the night from the negroes, who seemed hardly to have recovered their senses; but at last he found that the electric fluid had struck the mill, and the fire spreading rapidly soon reduced the whole premises to ruins. That he himself had been knocked down by lightning, and taken up, as his men supposed, a corpse—the third for that night; an old woman and a boy having previously fallen victims to the fury of the storm. Medical aid had been sent for, and the doctor on his arrival compelled his patient to keep his bed that day; but the next morning he was enabled to survey the havoc that the tempest had made in his property, not only in destroying the buildings, but in serious injury done to the growing crops.

Fortunately for Eveleyn the premises were insured, but they only represented a portion of his loss; and at

the time when he expected to be *en route* for England, all his ready money was expended in repairing damages caused by the hurricane.

He had had too many reverses of fortune during the last few years to be much discouraged by this accident, and, as soon as he arranged with the insurance office, he commenced to repair all damages, and in a few months every trace of the recent catastrophe had been removed.

This accomplished, the desire to return to England came upon him with increased force, and he resolved at any cost to gratify what seemed to him to be a mysterious impulse. But on consulting his exchequer he found his means sadly disproportioned to the cost of the journey. What should he do? Sell the property, and say adieu to the West Indies for ever, was one proposition which, after due consideration, he abandoned in favour of raising a large sum on mortgage, which he knew could be easily done, as the property well managed was worth considerably more than the amount of the old debt.

Having matured his plan, he was not slow in putting it into action ; and as soon as the necessary deeds were complete, he found that he was in possession of fifteen hundred pounds sterling ; twelve of which he remitted to his old London bankers, and with the remaining three hundred he determined to make the tour of the United States and Mexico, where he expected to accumulate the materials for a book of travels, with which he might reimburse himself.

During his stay on the island he had ample proofs of the integrity and ability of William Duverdier, who had, during the past year, taken to himself Fanny, the mulatto girl, to wife. Establishing them in the house, and making every arrangement that forethought could devise to secure the perfect management of his property, he, not without some feelings of regret, and amid the tears and blessings of the negroes, bade Barbadoes good-bye, though, as he said, "he hoped not for ever."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE END CROWNS THE WORK.

EVELEYN landed at Vera Cruz; penetrated from thence into the interior; satisfied himself that Cooper's Red men were not painted from life (but then photography was unknown); slew deer and buffalo; visited Chihuahua, then joined one of the American waggon parties, and set out for the United States.

Once within the boundaries of the great Republic, he abandoned his travelling companions. Journeying over the prairies, the predatory bands of Indians rendered all excursions, other than in large parties, impossible; but this necessity having ceased, Eveleyn was glad to resume his independence of action.

His wanderings at length brought him into the heart of Texas, where also he had enjoyed some admirable sport; sometimes alone, and occasionally in the company of one or more hunters.

One of these men particularly attracted Eveleyn's attention, from sundry traces of good breeding and former refinement, which even the rough manner of a Texan Ranger, and his remarkable taciturnity, could

not all conceal. In person he was tall, lithe, sinewy ; but a touch of grey was perceptible in his hair, and in the huge beard that grew up almost to the eyes.

From the fluency with which he spoke the French language, he was supposed to be one of that nation ; but as he was equally familiar with the English tongue, his nationality could not well be determined by his speech, in the ears of the half-wild people among whom he lived.

His companions called him *Le Motte* ; his reputation as a rifle shot being deservedly high, they cared not for his antecedents or pedigree. Texan society heeded little of quarterings, bends, or escutcheons ; bone, muscle, and a bold heart were considered a better title to respect than all the blood of all the Howards.

There was a dangerous look in this unknown hunter's eye, which fitly corresponded with certain sinister rumours respecting his career. Most of his acquaintance stood more or less in awe of him ; for he who has the nerve to send a bullet through an enemy's brain, seldom lacks for long a suitable opportunity in those rough regions, to prove the correctness of his aim.

In the old world the glorious liberty of the subject is sadly hampered by police regulations, and a distressingly inquisitive set of men, known popularly as *crown-ers*, probably from the old Latin adage, "*finis coronat opus*"—their duties being, generally speaking, to prove that some unlucky wretch has crowned his work by letting out some fellow sinner's life inopportunistically.

But, leaving the antiquarian question in all its mys-

tery, there cannot be a doubt that when a man performs in his own person the office of judge, jury, and executioner, he settles his difficulties in a prompt and inexpensive manner. Whether Le Motte had ever availed himself of this primitive method of executing justice, was never very clearly proved ; but several had observed that those people who unhappily differed from him in opinion, frequently met with fatal accidents. This reputation entitled him to a good deal of respect, and when in society he chose to ventilate his ideas, he found few disposed to dispute his dicta. Like most spoilt children, who are accustomed to have their own way, the indulgence Le Motte constantly experienced, rendered him rather imperious ; so that it required a good deal of forbearance on the part of his associates to preserve the peace with him. On more than one occasion he has been known to request a friend with whom he had been debating, to step out in the clearing ; and when he tried conclusions in this manner, he generally succeeded in making a good hit.

One evening, our friend, with Eveleyn and a few others, found themselves, after an unsuccessful day's hunting, the guests, or rather customers, at a spirit store, which, in all the misshapen ugliness of a log hut, formed the first habitation in a future "Eden."

The night was cold, raw, and rainy ; a huge wood fire blazed before the door of the hut, serving, in addition to its ordinary use, the purpose of a gas-lamp on a large scale. The vile compound, appropriately designated "fire water" by the Indians, was freely par-

taken of by the hunters, most of whom seemed disposed to make up for a week's abstinence by enjoying what they termed "a right-down good drunk."

The conversation, which was carried on in a loud and boisterous key, turned chiefly on hunting topics, varied with incidental notices of agricultural operations, conducted by enterprising men, who were pushing the plough farther and farther every year into the realm of primeval barbarism. But although there was the usual amount of opinionativeness displayed, incidental to such a gathering, nothing occurred to disturb the harmony of the meeting, or rather there was very little probability of the monotony of a systematic drinking bout being diversified by the excitement of a fight. Whether the individuals present were too fatigued to get up a row, or entertained too much respect for the prowess of their companions, is not known, but there were evident symptoms of the entertainment preserving its abnormal sameness (for some of the choicest spirits were becoming helplessly inebriated), when the thick, swarthy figure of an Indian, attended by a young girl of his nation, was revealed by the fire light, as the twain made their unexpected entrance into the hut.

The man shook his head, and the wet flew from his hair like a mop when it is wrung.

"Cuss the red devil's impudence!" said one of the hunters of Eveleyn's party, as the shower sprinkled his face.

The Indian, however, heeded not the observation, and walking up to the storekeeper, asked for rum.

"Plant yer pewter fust, old yalla ochre," said the host.

The Indian took a quarter-dollar from his pouch, and placed it on the rough-hewn board which formed the counter, receiving in exchange at least half-a-pint of the coveted liquor. Just as he raised the cup to his mouth, before it had touched his lips, a hand flashed before his eyes, and the vessel was dashed to the ground. He turned, and saw that it was his companion's act, who knew too well what effect the draught would produce. Insulted in the presence of men, insulted, moreover, by a woman, was a humiliation too great to be borne. All the savage in him was on fire, and without a moment's hesitation he flung his hatchet at the young girl's head. Le Motte, who stood next him, instantly perceiving his intent, struck up his arm, and the missile flew hissing through the doorway into the fire, sending up a shower of sparks as it buried itself in the ashes of the crackling logs. Simultaneously with the fall of the hatchet its owner lay sprawling on the floor, knocked down by a hunter's fist; but before he could recover his feet the object of his wrath flew to the rescue, and stood between him and his opponents.

All eyes were now turned on the young girl, and Eveleyn was not slow to remark that her personal attractions were superior to anything he had yet seen among the female portion of the aborigines. A second glance, however, told him that she was a half-breed, and owed her regularity of feature and intelligent expression to a moiety of foreign blood.

Half stunned by the blow, the Indian rose to his feet, and regained possession of his rifle, while she whose life he would have taken, stood like a shield before him, her dark eyes flashing defiance round the circle of half-drunken men who enclosed her.

"She's a fine gal!" said one.

"A gallus smart gal!" said another.

"Too good-looking for him," said Le Motte.

The object of these remarks now turned to her lord, and signified her readiness to leave, but though the brute evidently acknowledged the soundness of the advice, he returned the girl's look with a malicious scowl.

"No, no," said Le Motte, "you don't leave this location quite so easy, my friend."

"Why not?" said Eveleyn, speaking up.

"Cos," said two or three men, speaking together, "he'd brain her as soon as he got ten yards from the door."

"Impossible!" said Eveleyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the chorus derisively.

"Take his rifle from him," said one.

The Indian rushed to the door, but two sturdy figures reached it before him, and cut off his retreat. Starting back, he attempted to raise his weapon, but before he brought it to his shoulder a strong hand was twisted in his hair, and the red man was dragged backwards, while another of his opponents disarmed him. In a moment afterwards he was bound hand and foot, and thrown into the corner as if he were a log.

All this was accomplished before Eveleyn had time to interfere, though remonstrance would have been worse than useless, even if he had been doubly desirous to aid the weaker side.

"Ten to one is too long odds," said Eveleyn, "let the poor creature go."

"Stranger," was the reply, "you knows nothin' of Injin natur; it's the most cross-grained log as ever you seed."

"Let the young woman have her liberty then," said Eveleyn.

"Is it reckoned politeness in your clearin's," said Le Motte, "to turn a girl out in the woods such a night as this?"

"You know enough of the world, Le Motte," said Eveleyn, "to render it needless in me to say that this is not a parallel case."

This mode of address mollified the humour of the hunter.

"To show you," said he, "that we are not so barbarous as you imagine in our wish to retain the young girl, we will let her depart if she pleases."

Pointing to the open door, Le Motte moved aside, and made a passage for the fair Indian. But she shook her head, and pointed to her lord in the corner.

"I told you so," said Le Motte.

"Well, then," replied Eveleyn, "if she is ready to go with him, why not give the Indian his liberty?"

"Because," reiterated Le Motte, "he'll have her blood before morning."

"What do you mean to do with her then?"

"You are not my guardian," said the hunter. "What if I want a housekeeper! Your city girls are of no use to me in the woods and swamps."

"You are joking," said Eveleyn, affecting a smile.

"I never joke," was the laconic answer.

"Unloose the man then," said Eveleyn.

"For him to raise the country by breakfast time! No, we are not quite so simple in these parts."

What could Eveleyn do? Persuasion was useless, force equally unavailing. So he relapsed into silence, to wait the issue of events.

Quiet being restored, the party resumed their orgie, and as there is a limit to the impenetrability of the hardest heads, after a time one by one the revellers became oblivious, except Le Motte, who left off drinking long before any of his companions, partly from disinclination to the liquor, and partly that his attention might not be distracted from the pretty half breed, whom he had made to sit beside him on an inverted tub. During his long wanderings in the wilds, the hunter had picked up a good deal of the language of some of the tribes, among others that of the Comanches, and addressing his new acquaintance in that tongue, he extracted some small portions of her history.

The girl was evidently indisposed to be communicative, and her interrogator could obtain very little more information than that she had been in Mexico, and had become the wife of the Indian some three months previously.

"Aren't you tired of him?"

No answer.

"Doesn't he beat you sometimes?"

No reply.

"If this is your usual style of conversation," ejaculated Le Motte, "you're unlike most women of my acquaintance. But," he added in a whisper, "you're a deuced pretty girl though for all that."

His companion affected not to understand him.

"You are a deep file," said Le Motte, "but I'll take a rise out of you yet."

Then addressing Eveleyn, he said—"Don't you think she is good-looking?" and immediately interpreting his remark to the object of his admiration, who turned round to look for the answer in Eveleyn's eyes; a reply which she was not slow in apprehending, without the assistance of her self-elected protector.

"Ah!" said he, "so you do understand me when you choose; and since this is the case, I advise you to get a nap in the corner, as we have a long walk before us to-morrow."

While this conversation was going on, the light from the fire had become so dim, that, save where the speakers sat, the rest of the interior of the hut was in shadow; therefore the Indian was enabled to work quietly and unobserved at the neckerchief which bound his arms, and after a great deal of trouble he succeeded in freeing them, when it was an easy task to unbind his legs.

Having accomplished so much successfully, he waited until he saw Le Motte's attention wholly occupied with

his wife, then noiselessly gaining his feet, he managed to secure one of the sleeper's knives, and thus armed stole to the door-way.

Eveleyn, however had perceived the prisoner's intention from the first, but thought it wise to let the savage escape, especially as he appeared disposed to take himself off quietly.

The Indian passed the threshold and turned.

"Why does he stop?" thought Eveleyn. "What is he hesitating about?"

Could he have looked into the Red-man's heart, he would have seen vengeance and hatred struggling there for the mastery. The life of one of two individuals was in his power; should he take that of his foe, or should he vindicate his honour by the sacrifice of his wife? Oh, terrible dilemma: two of the choicest pleasures of savage life before him, and he knew not which to choose.

While he stood thus hesitating, Le Motte moved so that the doorway came in sight, where the dark figure of his late prisoner obscured the light. He grasped his rifle; the half breed also seized it, when a knife flung by her husband grazed her side, slightly cut her hand, and inflicted a fearful gash immediately above Le Motte's hip. Heedless of the pain, the latter pointed his weapon in the direction of his enemy's flight, pulled the trigger, when the wild shriek, and the dull thud of a falling body, told that the bullet had reached its mark.

The intended victim rushed out to the rescue of her

stricken lord, while Eveleyn sprang forward to help the wounded hunter.

The hemorrhage was fearful, evidently an artery was injured. The least exertion on the part of the sufferer augmented the flow of blood; still it was no easy task to induce him to be quiet.

The report of the rifle awoke the landlord, who now came to Eveleyn's assistance. Pulling off his shirt, he tore it into strips, and applied the bandage thus made to the gash. But all their chirurgical skill failed to stop or scarcely diminished the loss of blood, which already had produced faintness, when Eveleyn remembered that he had seen the black spider's web successfully employed as a styptic after ordinary means had failed. Looking up he perceived an abundance of that material, and collecting nearly a handful he laid it on the wound, and in a few moments the hemorrhage ceased.

The life-tide had ebbed so freely, that it was necessary to supply the patient with a little stimulant, which operated successfully. When he had thoroughly regained his consciousness, he asked to be laid down, as in the sitting posture he suffered great pain. Some straw was gathered together just where he sat, a log of wood covered with a coat formed a pillow, and on this extempore couch they carefully placed the wounded man, who evidently appreciated their kindness.

"What's become of the Indian?" said he; "I hit him, I know."

"Never mind," said the landlord. "The stranger's gone out to see."

Though Eveleyn had furnished himself with a pine knot, which he managed to light, he searched in vain in the neighbourhood of the hut for any traces of the fugitives. He made the circuit of the clearing twice, then he entered the outskirts of the wood, and after occupying an hour in this manner, he returned to the cabin with the intelligence that neither husband nor wife was to be found.

"Very odd," said Le Motte; "I pinned him, to a dead certainty. Never an Indian screeched like him unless he was badly hurt."

The hunter was right; a week after these occurrences, the landlord found, some half a mile off in the wood, concealed beneath a heap of old bark, the festering body of a man, whose black, coarse hair was of itself sufficient to identify him with the unwelcome guest at his hostelry.

Whether he had struggled there with the assistance of another, or whether his dead body had been carried to that spot for concealment by his widow, was never known, any more than the ultimate fate of the young girl.

The pain was so severe, that the patient could not suppress his groans entirely, though every now and then he affected to treat the matter lightly. Before morning dawned, however, a change came over his mind, and he felt his strength was ebbing away. He then beckoned Eveleyn to his side. "You are an Englishman?" said he.

"I am!"

"Do you return to England soon?"

"Such is my intention."

Then a long pause.

Le Motte again commenced—"I too am an Englishman."

"I thought so."

"Why?"

"Your speech betrays you. None but natives master the idiom of the language."

"As an Englishman, will you do me a favour?"

"What is it?"

"Put your hand in my coat pocket, and take possession of the sealed packet there. Have you got it?"

"Yes!"

"Don't open it while I breathe, afterwards you may do as you like, as to the time when you read the contents of the papers; but I request you will convey to my family the intelligence of my death."

"I promise you."

Towards morning Le Motte grew very restless, thereby displacing the bandage and spider-web plaister. The blood was never staunched again till the hunter's life had welled out through the wound.

Next day, in the presence of his companions, Le Motte's remains were placed in a rude grave, the head and foot of which two rough stones only marked.

After this duty was performed, Eveleyn opened the packet, and found he had acted as chief mourner at the funeral of Edward Levinge.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOUNDINGS.

INSTEAD of following Eveleyn step by step from town to town, as he pursued his homeward journey, we must fall into a temporary trance, and awake with him once more entering the dining-room of his own house.

There sits Lilla, with a brace of boys rolling about the carpet, looking the perfect realization of domestic happiness. The post had brought her a letter a fortnight before, announcing her brother's arrival at Liverpool; but as business required his presence in London, she knew not when to expect him.

What step is that? The young mother looks up, and exclaims—

“Eveleyn, I declare! My darling Eve—”

The rest was lost in a dozen kisses.

“How are your little ones, Lilla? What splendid boys they are!” said the brother.

“Yes, aren't they, Evy?” replied the mother, her eyes sparkling with delight. “Jack is the heaviest and tallest boy of his age in Bricklinton, and Jimmy is the handsomest child I ever saw, and so says everybody.”

"And is Jack's papa well?"

"Oh yes, dear; charming. I will send for him."

"No, thanks; I will hunt him out of his den myself."

Before dinner-time arrived, Eveleyn had seen his relatives and nearly all his friends, and could hardly restrain himself from shaking hands with the drunken town-crier, so delighted was he to see again familiar faces, and exchange kind words with those of the humbler class who had not forgotten him.

"I declare," said he after dinner, "Bricklington seems like a paradise to me; the very water-spouts, with their queer, carved faces on the church parapet, grin an honest welcome, and the huge hands of the clock seemed to wave to me in mute greeting. A few years ago all the orators in Europe could not have persuaded me that the town possessed one redeeming feature, but now I have positively an affection for the very shop windows, and the tailors' dummies look like old friends. I should recommend any father who wishes to cure his son of roaming, to send him to the colonies or America for a few years, and you may rely on it at the expiration of the term he will gladly return home, and ever after perceive charms in his native place which he never observed before.

The very small excitement which Eveleyn's return had caused soon died away, and the traveller passed up and down Main Street unheeded, as if he had never been a week out of the country. It mortifies one's vanity to ascertain for the first time how little your value is appre-

ciated by your fellows. If you have power to abuse, patronage to indulge nepotism, or money to squander, then indeed is my lord a pillar of the state, a prop of the constitution, a man whose existence is essential to society, whose removal by death would be a national calamity, until the reaper gathers the shock, and the world says, "Is it not wonderful how little he is missed!" But if none of these advantages are yours, though you may have all the virtues of all the saints, you may die every day in the week, and provided your bills are paid, none out of your own family will have an interest in your fate except the undertaker and sexton.

For the first two months after his return Eveleyn was actively engaged in preparing his travels for the press. The ordeal of submitting them to some publisher for his reader's opinion followed, and a satisfactory verdict having been pronounced, an arrangement profitable to the author was entered into.

"I must ask for house room a little longer," said Eveleyn to his brother-in-law. "I have to correct the proofs of my book, and until the work is finished, I shall not give my attention to any other occupation."

"Don't be so ceremonious, Eveleyn," said his brother-in-law; "the house is yours, and we are lodgers."

Eveleyn smiled, and the subject dropped.

"Do you ever see anything of Miss Howard now, Jack?"

"I had that pleasure," replied Hilton, "a few days prior to your return. You know I am her solicitor?"

"No, I think not. By the way, where are the Ethelfields now?"

"At Scarborough. I heard to-day that Ethelfield has had another seizure of paralysis."

"Dear me! Who has his business now?"

"Chiefly myself."

"Indeed! Ah, I remember Lilla wrote me all about it; but the letter came at the time of my bonfire in Barbadoes, and I had forgotten its contents. It must be a nice thing for you."

"Yes it is; but the position has its drawbacks. It has opened to us the doors of the county society, and Lilla has become such a terrible aristocrat that she offends half of my clients by declining to ask them to her parties; so that which is a gain to me in one direction is a loss in another."

"You surprise me!"

"Yes; we had just accomplished a large evening party a few days before your arrival; and some little awe of you has been the sole restraining cause that has prevented Lilla from repeating the entertainment. Moreover, these parties are so terribly expensive that I dread them. The old ladies come so hungry, and the men invariably arrive with a week's unslaked thirst, that the cost of one of our suppers is a serious consideration."

"Oh," said Eveleyn, "I will persuade her out of it."

Jack smiled incredulously.

"I hope, Evy," said his sister that evening, "you have not forgotten to dance."

"Why, dear?"

"Because Jack and I intend giving a hop next week."

"Nonsense, my dear," said the latter individual, laughing; "you must omit my name."

"Oh, you know, Jack, you are fonder of company than I am!"

"Query," observed the husband.

"Oh yes, dear, you know very well you are; and besides, the Waterpark people and the Smythes have asked us twice since they were here."

"Well, my dear, Mrs. Davis can afford it; besides, she has a regular team of servants, and can do the thing in style, whereas you will have to toil in the kitchen for days, whipping creams, fabricating meringues, and arranging at what time of the evening the marsala is to take the place of sherry."

"Now don't provoke me, Jack," replied the little lady, evidently getting very angry. "You know I never give a party to please myself. It is entirely because you are a professional man, and it is necessary that you should be civil to your clients. For my part, I do not care if I never dance again." (N.B. At the last assembly Mrs. Hilton danced till four o'clock in the morning.)

Her husband, perceiving that his better half had made up her mind to give an entertainment, withdrew his opposition, saying—

"Have your own way, my dear."

The next question was to decide who were to be invited. At the head of the list stood the Davises of Waterpark; then the Smythes, Thomases—gradually descending from the empyrean of the county set to the borders of plebeian air, when Mrs. Hilton came to a dead stop.

"Of course you will ask the Wymottes," said her husband.

"No, certainly not; Mr. Wymotte kept a shop," said Mrs. Hilton.

"Nonsense, Lilla!" replied her husband. "Mr. Wymotte is a man of fortune; the chances are he will represent the borough at the next election. His wife is a lady, and his two sons are at college, where the eldest has a high reputation; and you know very well that after we married they were very kind to us, and we were also glad to accept their hospitality."

"They were very glad to have our society, Jack; and we can have them some day to ourselves."

"In other words," said Hilton, "we will not introduce our old friends to our new acquaintances, fearing they might disgrace us."

"Now, Jack, don't tease me, there's a good fellow," said his wife, and then she continued—"What beaux shall we have?"

"Brown, Jones, Robinson, and Co., I suppose," said her husband.

Mrs. Hilton took no notice of the observation.

"I tell you what, Jack," said she, her eyes brighten-

ing; "you know Captain Facings, of the Greys—couldn't you ride over to Harboro, and ask him to come, and bring one or two of his brother officers?"

"It's no use, my dear, the cavalry swells have declined to visit anyone in Bricklinton—you know they refused the Hollands last week?"

"Yes, Jack. But don't you see, if you ask them quietly through your friend, no one will know if they should refuse; and should they come, it would make the Hollands mad—wouldn't that be jolly?"

Hilton and Eveleyn burst out laughing. "Well, if I ask the 'Greys,' " said the master of the house, "will you invite Fairleigh and young James?"

"I will ask the latter, if you like."

"Why not the former?"

"How can you ask such a question? Isn't his father the railroad contractor? Impossible, Jack!"

"Well, why ask James, then?—his father is a merchant."

"How stupid you men are! James is only known here as a gentleman; but Fairleigh, everybody knows."

"Indeed, Lilla," said her husband, "you are very ridiculous. Fairleigh is incomparably superior to James in every respect. He is very talented—an accomplished musician, a literary man of great promise, irreproachable in conduct and appearance; in London, he mixes in first class society; but because our squires have all the pride of the Spaniards, and have not the capacity to appreciate ability or refinement out of their own set,

or to estimate learning at its true worth, forsooth my friend Fairleigh is not to be invited to our party. Preposterous!"

"Indeed, Jack," said his wife, drawing herself up to her full height, "you don't understand these questions. You and I have not sufficient strength to carry up with us all our old acquaintance, and I am not going to have my parties stigmatized as mixed, and people turning up their noses at my invitations, saying, 'Oh, Mrs. Hilton is at home on such or such an evening—I shan't go,' 'and I shan't go—there will be nobody there but a parcel of tradespeople.' I have all the trouble of preparing, and I think I have a right to ask whom I like, and shall most certainly avoid bringing a lot of people together, who have nothing in common but malice and uncharitableness."

"You pain me, Lilla," said Eveleyn, who had hitherto been silent. "I could not have thought it possible that my sister could have so far forgotten her true position, and family antecedents, as to have given utterance to the sentiments you have expressed. Of course you understand that I consider myself in the same category as those you have tabooed."

"My dear Eveleyn, how can you say so? you know how I love you."

"After your own fashion, I suppose you do," said her brother. "But your affection has no relation to the point at issue. I see that you are unhappily bitten with the great-folk fever, which (perhaps unknowing to yourself) will lead you into the depths of flunkeyism."

I plainly perceive your object in life is (to use a cant term) to keep in with the County people, and as long as this is your aim, I pity you. Engaged in a struggle, through dirt, to gain a valueless privilege, is to pursue the very shadow of a shade. If you lose, all the world will laugh at you ; if you win, you have gained nothing. I have no objection to see you mixing with the proudest of this proud set, I consider you are their equal ; but to gain their society at the expense of old friendships, is the lowest degree of meanness. Those whom you consider good enough to associate with, are eligible for admission into your drawing-room at all times ; and if your new acquaintance refuse to visit you because they may meet some of your old friends, I hold that you are better without the company of such individuals."

"My dear Eveleyn !"

"We will not argue the point, Lilla," said he, interrupting her ; "I simply repeat my observation, that I consider myself in the same category as those you taboo."

Nothing deterred, Mrs. Hilton gave her party ; and if anyone expected to see her brother, the traveller, that evening, he or she was doomed to disappointment, as Mr. Eveleyn adhered to his resolution, and went over to Harboro for a few days. Notwithstanding his absence, the entertainment went off very well. Mrs. Davis, of Waterpark, remarked to Miss McCatty, that Mrs. Hilton managed to entertain her company as if she had been born in the society she now moved in.

Miss McCatty, having found it to be her interest to

cultivate the society of the Hiltons, told that lady that Mrs. Davis was exceedingly pleased with the party, and paid Mrs. Hilton a very high compliment, which she only wished she was at liberty to repeat.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN UNEXPECTED OFFER.

As soon as Eveleyn had prepared his book for the press, he was at liberty to choose some occupation. It did not require much deliberation to determine on taking a farm; he had nearly enough capital, and the proceeds of his work would make up the deficiency. The agricultural profession pleased him better than any other, for many reasons. It afforded him plenty of exercise, out-door occupation, and time for study, so that it would be quite possible to continue literary pursuits, without neglecting the duties of his calling. On consultation with his brother-in-law, he found that a farm belonging to one of the town charities would be vacant at Michaelmas.

"It is not rich land," said Hilton, "but it consists of dry, useful soil, well adapted for the four-course system. The out-buildings are tolerably good; the house, though small, is beautifully situated, surrounded by fine trees, standing on a knoll that slopes down to the river."

"It is called Weymoir Hill, if I remember right," said Eveleyn.

"Yes! The only disadvantage is, that the outgoing

tenant is a wretched sloven, and the farm is completely overrun with charlick and couch grass."

"If the trustees will take the condition into account, I should rather like the task of turning the wilderness into the fruitful field—I have often done so before. Of course I can have a lease?"

"Doubtless. If you will leave it to me, I will see the trustees on the subject to-morrow, and then we can drive over there on Thursday, and determine what you think it is worth."

"Thanks." Then looking at his watch, he said, "I shall have time before dinner to see the old mill again, and return James's call."

For the first time since his arrival in Bricklinton, Eveleyn found himself on the old walk beside the mill-leet. There nothing seemed strange, the trees still arched overhead, the long green feathery weed floated as of old, waving to and fro with the stream. The summer flies skimmed over the surface, and at the largest of these the little trout jumped vigorously. "The great current of life seems scarcely to have set in here," said he to himself; "no wonder that in these isolated spots the mind becomes narrow, and the grandeur of the soul is cramped. Yet I am returning to a life as quiet. Shall I, too, grow rusty, and become a clod?"

Before he had answered the question, he found himself at the mill-door; and in another minute he was seated on the old stool as in the days gone by.

When Eveleyn left the country at the expiration of the lease, the mill reverted to Mr. Salmon, who imme-

diately asked such an extravagant rent, that all intending tenants shook their heads and cried off. The premises remained vacant for a year, and were rapidly falling into decay, when Salmon's solicitors remonstrated with him on the folly of his suicidal policy, and obtained from him full powers to treat with any person who would take it on fair terms.

James, Eveleyn's late clerk, hearing of this, made an offer, which was ultimately accepted, though it was less than half the rent the owner expected to receive. Entering upon his undertaking with energy and industry, and being secured with a lease, he made many improvements, and soon was possessed of a flourishing trade.

"I am truly glad to see you here once again, Mr. Eveleyn," said James. "I hope you will remain among us for the future."

"Thank you," replied Eveleyn. "I intend that Clayshire shall find me a resident for some time to come. How are you getting on with the mill?"

"Very nicely, sir; will you walk round the premises?"

"With pleasure."

"Here," said James, opening a door, "is our new steam engine;" and then passing on, "This is our new store room," and thus conducting his visitor from one point to another, he showed him all the improvements that had been effected during the past years.

"I must indeed congratulate you," said Eveleyn, "on the important changes you have made. I trust

you find that your money has not been expended in vain."

"No, sir, it has not, although I have had some difficulties to encounter, as three-fourths of the capital laid out I have borrowed, and two thousand pounds remain unpaid; but as our trade is very good, this amount is a mere flea-bite. And now, Mr. Evelyn, I have a proposition to make.

"What is it?"

"I want you to take this business off my hands, and let me resume my position as your confidential clerk."

"What! give up the prospect of seven hundred a year for two-hundred and fifty? I don't understand you."

"Do you not think that a man should pay his debts, Mr. Evelyn?"

"Certainly."

"Even to his last shilling?"

"Of course."

"Are there any obligations so sacred as those of honour and gratitude?"

"No!"

"Then, sir, you will understand my motive for making this proposition, when I tell you that I am under an obligation to your late father which no money can liquidate; and the only proof I can give of my desire to show my sense of the service I have received at his hands, is to ask you to become my chief again, and resume the possession of that property which, but for an accident, would be now your own."

"You astonish me, James; I cannot understand

that so great a debt of gratitude could ever have been incurred by you, as to justify you in abandoning the honourable position you now fill."

"How that debt was contracted, sir, I cannot tell you; suffice it to say, that not only am I indebted to your father for my success in business, but I owe him more than life; and the greatest boon you could confer on me would be to accept my offer, made, as I assure you it is, in the sincerity of my heart."

"I do not doubt you; but yet I feel, even if I were so disposed, that I could not do other than decline your offer."

"You pain me, sir, inexpressibly. You cannot imagine what intense satisfaction I should enjoy if I felt that the family to whom I owe everything, reaped some small benefit from my exertions."

Eveleyn remained silent awhile. After a little reflection, he said:—"If you will in part transfer your offer from myself to my brother George, I will lay it gladly before him; that is if you will take him as your partner on equal terms, he finding half the capital?"

"I should prefer that you, Mr. Evelyn, accepted my original proposition. I assure you it is no sudden thought, or unpremeditated offer; from the moment when I first took the mill I have had this object in view."

Eveleyn laid his hand upon his late clerk's shoulder. "James," said he, "I thoroughly appreciate your magnanimity. If my taste lay in the direction of paper-making, I would substitute myself for my

brother. As it is, however, I should more highly value your disinterestedness if George might occupy my place."

The eyes of the two men met ; each read sincerity and high resolve in the look of the other, while scarce suppressed emotion was visible on either face.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AT ANCHOR.

THE months rolled round, not idly employed by Eveleyn, who devoted all his time to study; until at length Michaelmas arrived, and found him once more the tenant of a farm, and busily engaged in securing the crop of corn which he had taken at a valuation.

Since his return from Barbadoes he had resided with the Hiltons; now he was again alone, and, save when a stray friend dropped in on him, no voice answered his own, in the lengthening evenings. It was the old Barbadian life renewed, the same solitude to be endured that he had wearied of before. The wild weird longing for companionship, for the society of some congenial spirit, grew upon him with increasing force; this was the chief cause that had induced him to recross the Atlantic, and the deep wish of his heart seemed as far from being realised as ever. Was there not one being in whom all his hopes centred? He dared not ask himself the question. And yet, in the still hours of the night, in the early morning, in his lonely rambles about the fields, there was one form ever present to his imagination. "But ah," he used to say to himself, "why

do I delude my heart with hope, that is not hope, but a vain fantasy?"

Wigmore Hall was situated within three miles of Green End, the village where we once accompanied Kate Howard in one of her ministrations; and the high road leading thither from Bricklington skirted one side of Eveleyn's farm.

One evening at the latter end of October, he was standing on the fence which bounded the road on the top of the hill leading down to the village, when he saw a pony chaise advancing slowly up the ascent towards him. Its sole occupant was a lady, and though the distance was too great to discern accurately her person, instantly an impression seized him that it was Kate Howard.

Jumping down on the road, he slowly and with hesitancy descended the hill, until his nearer approach confirmed the truth of his supposition.

The reins were thrown carelessly on the splash-board, the old pony walked up the hill very leisurely, as if he were debating whether it would not be as well to stand still, while the eyes of his mistress, bent downwards, indicated that she was lost in reflection.

It was not until she could have touched Eveleyn with her outstretched hand, that she looked up, and started as if she had seen an apparition, the colour first receding from, and then suffusing her cheeks with bright carnation.

"Mr. Evelyn," said she, extending her hand; "I did not expect to see you."

"The surprise is mutual," he replied, "I hope the pleasure is equally so?"

Kate smiled, saying—"Certainly I am very glad to see you. I heard of your arrival at Bricklinton, but as I never enter the town except on business, probably some time would have elapsed before we should have seen each other."

"I presume," said Eveleyn, "from seeing you here alone, that you are still engaged in your philanthropic schemes?"

"I have been visiting a poor woman," said Kate, half evasively, and at a loss for a reply. "And you, Mr. Evelyn, are you wearied of foreign lands—do you long for rest in the corn-fields of poor old Clayshire?"

"You are partly, but not altogether right in your conjecture, Miss Howard. There is much that is delightful in foreign travel; the aspects of nature in the countries I have visited, are grander, more startling and varied; but we have all our instinctive love for the land of our birth, and I have found with Tennyson—

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

"And yet you paint in glowing colours the lands you have visited. The fertility of the West Indies, the youthful energy and vigour of the United States, the natural wealth and inexhaustible resources of the remoter provinces—and then you have thrown such a halo of romance around your hunter's life in Mexico and Texas, that I, a woman, repine at the enforced inactivity of our sex."

"Then you have read my book?"

"Yes! But no book ever truly and completely repre-

sented the whole heart of the writer. I do not believe it possible, fully and adequately, to portray on paper your inner experiences, secret aspirations, and soul longings, and if you could, no one would read the egotistical revelation."

"Much less, Miss Howard, does a book of travels, such as I have written, give expression to all I thought and felt in roaming in foreign lands, though the impressions recorded are truthful—there is a larger volume unwritten."

They reached the top of the hill, and then the rays of the setting sun flashed brightly across the road, falling on Kate's face, and bathing it in warm light. Eveleyn looked up, wondering at her beauty, and its changed expression. The look of patrician pride, which was so marked in early days, had given place to a pensive and at times melancholy air, that told of soul-chastening influences, which contrasted almost strangely with the light that still flashed from her dark eye when she spoke, and the clear-cut outline of her lips, once indicative of another nature. Ten years had elapsed since we first saw her, the cynosure of the Clayshire foxhunters—ten years wherein sickness, care, mortification, and family sorrow had wrought marked changes in her life. Yet withal, her beauty had not waned, but, now developed in the prime of womanhood, it was more perfect than ever. All this Eveleyn saw at a glance, and the old love, that had so long been smouldering, came back with more than its former intensity and power.

He accompanied her to the turning of the road, and after she bade him good evening, he stood bare-headed, watching the carriage until it was out of sight.

When we last paid Castle Croft a visit, Mr. Howard was alive, and Kate, the mistress, was engaged in earning money to accomplish some benevolent scheme, which afterwards proved to be the erection of three model cottages, and the repairing of sundry others, in which all her capital was expended. Then came her father's death, and the breaking up of her home—the estate being vested in the hands of trustees till the heir came of age. Her father had, however, provided for her by insuring his life, so that at his decease she inherited the sum of ten thousand pounds—a handsome fortune for a gentlewoman; but, nevertheless, a mere pittance compared with the property which once was supposed must have been hers.

She had taken a pretty cottage residence, about four miles from Wigmore, in the centre of her district labours; and with an old lady companion, who played the part of house-keeper, she led a life of quiet usefulness, occasionally visiting her friends in the neighbourhood as well as at a distance, but devoting the greater portion of her time in endeavouring to improve the social and religious condition of the agricultural population around her.

Hers was a far less easy task than she imagined at the outset. The people, who received her cheerfully at first, soon exhibited signs of impatience when they found that her object was two-fold, charitable and re-

ligious, and that she insisted that the changes she had effected in cleanliness and other matters should be permanent. As long as she listened to their endless whinings, and gratified their greed and feeling of dependence by liberal alms, she was a dear lady, whom may God Almighty bless; but when she endeavoured to instil the sentiment of self-reliance, urging the necessity that the poorest should put their own shoulders to the wheel—that the husbands should give up ale and tobacco—that the wives should pay more attention to the cleanliness of their cottages, and take more pains to render their homes attractive to the men—“Ah,” they said, “what business have fine ladies to meddle in poor people’s affairs? We can do very well without her advice—that costs nothing. How would she like if Molly Jones was to go to her house to tell her how to make up her linen?”

After she had built her cottages, and put in as tenants three families most deserving of encouragement, she found, on returning from an absence of some weeks, two panes of glass in one of them broken, and their places supplied with fragments of a hat; while the family who occupied the centre cottage had thrown all their refuse water and potato peelings before the door, where the pig, emancipated from his neat sty, helped himself to the aforesaid dainties without restraint; and when the third tenant quitted, after a year’s residence, it was discovered that a great deal of the stairs and flooring of the bed-rooms had been used for firing. She offered prizes for the neatest gardens, and

though several were entered, the only difficulty the judges had to determine was, which of the owners had displayed the greatest lack of order and neatness in the arrangement and condition of their plot. Kate also attempted to stimulate the cultivation of bees. She gave several improved hives to her village friends, all of which she was informed were perfect failures—notwithstanding, in her own garden they had been attended with complete success. Oftentimes she came home sick at heart, and desponding, obliged to admit that her task was a very ungracious one. If, however, there was much to discourage her, there were also many gleams of sunshine. She found that human nature was very much alike in its different manifestations in all classes. The proud, the haughty, the benevolent, the honest, the malicious, the mean, the cunning, the frank and upright, had all their representatives among the lower orders. At one time she thought that there was no other distinction between the working classes and their superiors than social position; but she soon found that their peculiarities were just as marked—that there were some easily impressed with good feelings, that there were others whose hearts and inner lives were unapproachable; and when Kate learnt that to be poor and ignorant was not invariably synonymous with oppressed virtue, and an earnest desire for a better life, she understood that her efforts, to be effectual, must be conducted quietly, unostentatiously, with great skill of adaptation and determination. Moreover she found in a few months that the regeneration she would bring

about would first manifest itself in individual cases, few and far between, and that any extensive change must be the work of time. So she abandoned her larger views, and instead of driving a whole flock into the fold, she contented herself with rescuing solitary wanderers, and such as would be saved.

When she reached home after her interview with Eveleyn, the old lady, her companion, observed that she was a good deal flushed.

"Ah, my dear Miss Howard," said she, "you must not exert yourself so much!"

Kate laughed, but she did not recover her cheerfulness that evening, and retired to rest earlier than usual.

"Why should this meeting to-day," said Kate, "affect me? What is Mr. Evelyn to me that I should think of him twice?" Yet she did not banish him from her thoughts, or fall asleep earlier than usual, although she had retired before her ordinary time.

On the next occasion that she drove up Wigmore Hill she fell into no reverie, and when she saw a tall figure descending the incline she was not surprised to find it was Eveleyn. More than once they met in the same place, although Kate paid fewer visits to Green End than she had hitherto been accustomed to, and on different occasions she made a considerable detour to get home without meeting her friend; not that his society was distasteful to her, but lest he might imagine she multiplied opportunities for meeting him. Indeed, Eveleyn began to fear that he was persecuting Kate

Howard, and frequently made half resolves to wait for her less frequently; but day after day, whenever he thought there was a chance of seeing her, he stood sentinel on the Green End road.

It was on one of these occasions that he said to her, the conversation having turned on the subject of the working classes,—

“No permanent good, no great amelioration of their position, will take place until education is a living power amongst them; and something more should be afforded them than the rudiments of learning, which are but chips of the block out of which the goddess of knowledge is sculptured. Though it may be begrimed with rust, and callous by disuse, in the young at least the æsthetic faculty is not dead; and I think that the poor should have tales, travels, history, and poetry read to them. I often think that civilization was more uniform, though of a lower degree, in the ages prior to letters, when the traditions of a people were handed down orally, and the tribe or nation listened with delighted ears to the heroic deeds of their ancestors, which formed the subject matter of the songs of their bards. The civilization we possess is that of the few—semi-barbarism still prevails among the masses of the population; and it will never be removed until the intellectual faculty of man is universally cultivated, and developed in its highest degree. If you will not consider my proposal officious, I should be happy to relate to the Green End villagers some of my foreign adventures, on any evening when it would be agreeable to you to let me have your school room.”

"I gladly accept your offer," said Kate.

Eventually the evening was selected, and due notice given. The room was filled to the doors; and never did any man address a more attentive audience than Eveleyn, when he told the rustic men, women, and children, in a plain, unaffected manner, some of his experiences of foreign travel.

So successful was the experiment that in a week he repeated it, and subsequently read to them one of Dickens's novels, when, wisely terminating his labours before the novelty of the entertainment wore off, he taught his hearers to look forward with pleasure to the next occasion when he hoped to appear before them.

These occupations brought him into frequent contact with Kate Howard, and many a charming walk had he in her society. But every opportunity thus afforded him rendered the loneliness of his fireside more dreary.

CHAPTER XXVII.

REST.

"I FEAR you are not well this evening, Miss Howard," said Kate's companion to her as they sat watching the sunset from the drawing-room window.

It was spring time, the woods were bursting into foliage, and every tree seemed vocal with the melody of birds.

"Oh yes, thank you," replied Kate, "I am quite well!"

But, save this reply, she continued to maintain silence.

"I wonder," thought the good lady, "what ails Miss Howard? she has become very reserved of late!"

A footstep was heard on the gravel walk. Kate looked up. A shadow fell across the window. Who could it be? A loud knock reverberates through the house. The servant throws open the door, and announces Mr. Evelyn.

Kate rose, and greeted her visitor cordially, but with dignity.

"I must apologize," said Evelyn, "for this unseasonable visit, Miss Howard, but when I explain the nature of my mission I know you will excuse me. You

were kind enough to call yesterday morning on the invalid wife of my ploughman. I regret to say she is much worse this afternoon, and her husband came to me two hours ago with an earnest request from the sick woman that I would ask you to see her to-night. I told him I hardly thought it probable that you could gratify the poor creature's wish, but I would at the same time willingly be his messenger."

"Certainly," said Kate. "I will order my phaeton immediately."

"Pardon me," observed Eveleyn, "my dog-cart is waiting at the entrance gate, and it is at your service."

After a moment's reflection, Kate replied,—

"Thank you, I accept your offer."

It did not occupy the lady many minutes to prepare for the journey; and before a less energetic person would have decided what shawl to wear, she was being rapidly driven by Eveleyn in the direction of Green End.

The cottage was about six miles distant, and in three quarters of an hour Eveleyn pulled up at the door. Several of the neighbours were loitering about with long-drawn faces, and within was heard the voice of wailing.

"How is the poor woman?" said Kate.

"It's all over," said the man whom she addressed.

"And the baby?"

"Dead, miss."

"Alas," said Kate, "my services are of no avail."

"Shall I drive you back, Miss Howard?" said Eveleyn.

"Not yet, thank you."

Saying which Kate got down, and entered the house of mourning.

Half stupefied with grief, the husband sat rocking himself to and fro in the outer room, while the women performed the last offices for the dead. Kate laid her hand gently upon his shoulder, saying in her softest tone—

"My poor man, I grieve with you."

The mourner looked up, and with a voice thickened with sobs, and scarcely audible, muttered—

"This is our wedding-day, and they be both dead."

It was no easy task to soothe such grief, and Kate's tears fell also. Many words she felt would be worse than useless, but those she uttered fell on willing ears, for the listener knew that hers was no pharisaic righteousness. After promising to visit him again before the funeral, she took her leave.

Little was said either by Eveleyn or herself as he drove her home, but when they reached her cottage she asked him to come in and rest.

"Thank you, Miss Howard, it is getting late," said Eveleyn, "and I must return."

"But you must think of your horse, Mr. Evelyn; you have driven him twenty-two miles almost without stopping."

Eveleyn could not resist this second appeal, and threw the reins to the groom.

Without taking the trouble to go up stairs, Kate took off her bonnet and shawl, and laid them on the couch. Then inviting Eveleyn to join their simple supper, she and her friend sat down.

The sad scene they had just witnessed formed the chief topic of conversation till the tray was removed, and the old lady left the room to attend to some domestic duties.

"I cannot banish from my mind the picture of that poor grief-stricken ploughman," said Kate. "What a weary world this must be for him now!"

"Doubtless," said Eveleyn, "he feels, and will feel, his loneliness acutely. But—"

Then a pause ensued.

"But what?" said Kate.

"It will not be so difficult for him to replace his loss," replied Eveleyn, "as if he had been born in another sphere; then indeed his loneliness might be irremediable."

Something like a sigh escaped Kate's lips.

Eveleyn continued—

"Yes, that complete loneliness of spirit, that perfect isolation of soul, is a burden grievous to be borne. Do you not think so, Miss Howard?"

"Yes."

"But can you not imagine a lot still more dreary?"

"I hardly understand you."

"I mean to feel that solitariness in all its completeness, knowing at the same time that there is one who could fill the blank, and but one only, while there is no hope of winning that person's love!"

Kate was silent, and her eyelids fell.

What caused Eveleyn's heart to throb so wildly ?

"Miss Howard," said he, his voice becoming deeper from emotion, "is there, can there be, hope for me?"

Kate did not resist when he took her hand in his.

THE END.

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